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A SUMMER
IN THE
CENTRAL PROVINCES OF FRANCE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

“ Adieu ! plaisant pays de France ! ” sighed Mary Stuart, as she stepped, with a tear in her eye and a melancholy foreboding at her heart, on board the boat which was to convey her from its shores for ever. And I confess that had I as much reason as she had for supposing that I should never again breathe its clear atmosphere, or ramble among its woods and streams, my adieus would have been spoken in as sad a spirit.

For truly, much as men have done, and are doing, to render it otherwise, Nature has

intended France for a right pleasant and highly-favoured clime. From the green pastures and rich corn-lands of Normandy, to the vine-clad hills and olive groves of Provence, every temperate variety of atmosphere and soil conspires to produce a greater number of the thousand commodities, which to civilized man are become necessities, than any other portion of Europe of similar extent.

Yes! Mary Stuart was right! Assuredly France eminently deserves to be called a "plaisant pays." It is true, many a rood of green forest has, since her time, yielded before the plough and the wants of increasing population, and many a Macadamized road is carrying modern ideas and new manners into nooks and recesses of the country, which in those days contained a handful of isolated, and therefore almost unprogressing inhabitants. But, in spite of all that time and the march of events have done towards substituting the useful for the romantic, and reducing to a dead level the picturesque inequalities of provincial manners, France has not yet ceased to be either a "plaisant pays," or an interesting one to those lovers of the knapsack and staff, who delight, while seeking Nature's beauties in her most se-

cluded haunts, to investigate also all those whimsical peculiarities and intricate sinuosities of human character, which, constituting local characteristics, form so large and amusing a chapter in the general history of man, and furnish so instructive a commentary on the annals of European civilization.

To many persons who are accustomed to consider France as, *par excellence*, a land of change—a country where, above all others, “old things have passed away, and all things have become new”—who think that the tremendous storm which has passed over her has, in breaking up the great deep of the moral as well as the political constitution of the nation, prepared her to be the first-born of a new order of things—a new era in the history of the world—it may appear a startling assertion to affirm that France is in fact very far less changed than England from what they both were three hundred years ago.

Few, however, who know well, not Paris, but France—not the great towns, and the great houses, and the great roads only, but agricultural, rural France, in its far-away provinces, in its little market-towns, in its secluded hamlets, and scattered granges, will not be aware that such is the case.

Nor is it difficult to assign an adequate reason for the fact.

That change which in England has been the gradual and silent work of ages, was sought to be effected in France by a sudden and violent convulsion. In the one case, the new elements passed gradually into the bones and veins of the body social, and were assimilated, becoming integral and healthy parts of the system. In the other, the sudden violence of the treatment adopted succeeded indeed in throwing the whole body into convulsion, deranging the entire machinery of the constitution, and rendering it incapable of carrying on the vital functions in a healthy manner for many a generation to come, but yet left many of the smaller and more hidden parts of the social body almost unaltered by the violence of an agent, which has passed over and damaged them, but has not penetrated into their substance.

The gentle ripple of a stream will, in process of time, entirely obliterate the most enduring features of the soil over which it runs ; but the torrent-force of a sudden inundation leaves the fields, when it has subsided, with the crops indeed destroyed, and the beauty of the country defaced, but with its features and general form unchanged.

Infinitely more traces and remains of the days when every man's "country" was the territory around the principal city, near which he lived, are to be found in the habits and ideas of the provincial French, than among the English. Not only does the "Angevin," the "Tourangeau," the "Auvergnat," the "Poitevin," the "Berrichon," &c., invariably call himself by these provincial names, and feel each his own province to be his country, and his fellow provincials more especially his countrymen; but each of these has a distinct character, whose differences are perceptible, and preserves customs and ideas peculiar to his locality.

One very obvious cause of the much greater degree in which local character has been preserved in France than in England is the very marked inferiority of the former country in all the means of communication and travel—that great agent which renders men uniform by rubbing them together, as pebbles on the seashore are all made round by the continual rolling of the wave. The generality of Frenchmen, too, are naturally averse to travelling. A long journey—let Rousseau say what he will of the delights of "un voyage à faire;" (the "Paris au bout," I admit, would be enough to tempt a Frenchman from one

end of the world to the other)—is ever an object of dread and disagreeable necessity to him, and is never undertaken for its own sake.

This dislike of travelling may be a cause or a consequence of the bad and scanty provision of the means of locomotion in France. It is probably in some degree both.

All these circumstances conspire with several others, which it would take a volume to develop, to cause an infinitely greater difference to exist between Paris and the rest of France than exists between London and the rest of England. It has been frequently said that "Paris is France." And politically speaking, this is, most unfortunately for the country, almost absolutely true. No surer sign can be found that there is "something rotten in the state of" *la grande nation*, than the monstrous manner in which Paris has been able to lead all France by the nose.

We are suffering ourselves from a determination of blood to the head; but with our neighbours the disease has far more inveteracy, while the constitution has infinitely less stamina to resist it.

A politician, therefore—unless his views are much more extended than those of the generality of politicians—may study France in the palaces, the cabinets, the *salons*, the

“chambres,” and the streets of Paris. But he who would form a competent notion of the real body of the people—of that which should be the thews and sinews of the nation—of that which must eventually make that vast country something very different from what it is at present, must take a wider range.

The philosophical student of man, too, will hardly be content to form his estimate of so large and important a portion of mankind from the exquisitely artificial mass, which, in the streets, as well as in the society of Paris, is offered to him as a sample.

The lover of history can need no second invitation to a ramble through any part of a country so storied, so redolent of great names, so thickly strewn with localities of highest interest, so intimately linked in almost every period with the history of deeds and names dear to the remembrance of every Englishman.

The physiological inquirer again knows full well what important illustrations of his favourite science may be found in the characteristic differences of physiognomy, stature, temperament, and constitution, even yet to be observed in the descendants of these tribes of different origin, who settled themselves in different parts of the country.

The philologist also will find much material for curious and interesting research in the widely varying *patois* still existing unimpaired in many provinces, which have evidently arisen from the mixture of French with various other dialects of different origin.

But if, O, gentle reader, thou chancest to belong to any of these grave and learned classes, peradventure — nay, assuredly — I should be guilty of presumption in inviting thee to be a companion of my summer ramble, without warning thee that I am none of these; alas! sir, neither politician, historian, philosopher, physiologist, nor philologist, but a simple admirer of Nature in all her moods, an humble gleaner in the bypaths of history, and sometimes a desultory wanderer in the shady lanes of hoar antiquity, whose ways are, as the poet sings, “nor rough, nor barren,” “but strewn with flowers.”

And now, most gentle reader, that I have been thus honest with thee, and we fairly understand each other, how sayest thou? Wilt thou allow me to be thy guide through those wide-spread provinces of central France, which extend from the Loire to the Dordogne? The fertile Touraine, the picturesque Anjou, the storied La Vendée, Bordeaux, the rich,

Perigord, dear to the gourmand, the backward Limousin, the aristocratic Berri, with many an etcetera, shall all be ransacked in turn, and all yield us somewhat to admire or to reflect on, somewhat to interest our curiosity or amuse our fancy.

Allons !

CHAPTER II.

Departure from Paris — Parisian Pleasure-Parties — French Railroads—Versailles—The Musée Monstre—“ Toutes les Gloires de la France ”—Princess Mary’s “ Maid of Orleans ” — Journey to Rambouillet — St. Cyr — Chateau de Rambouillet — Journey to Épernon—A “ Commissionaire, comme il y en a peu ” — Épernon — A Night’s Unrest — Maintenon — The Chateau — Journey to Chartres.

At eight o’clock on as bright a morning as ever smiled on the white walls and grey roofs of Paris, I reached the railroad station among a crowd of hurrying, chattering passengers, bound, some for St. Germain, and some for Versailles.

The latter was my destination, as it was that of by far the greater number of the crowd. For it was one of the days on which Louis Philippe’s *musée monstre* is open to his admiring subjects; and the loveliness of the morning — one of the first really fine days of the spring of 1840 — had tempted numerous parties of pleasure-loving Parisians and sight-seeing strangers to fix on this morning for their visit to Versailles.

We Versaillians were all marshalled into the right-hand apartment of the two, which are prepared respectively to receive the travellers proceeding to the two destinations to which the railroad conducts. Here we had to wait half an hour, while our more fortunate neighbours in the next room were despatched to St. Germain. The minutes passed however not without amusement amid the gabble which filled the room on all sides. A Frenchman is totally without that feeling, whatever it may be, which makes an Englishman dislike speaking of his little domestic arrangements and household affairs before indifferent strangers. The various groups around me were many of them loudly discussing the difficulties which they had had to surmount before the desired trip to Versailles could be accomplished, or their various plans for passing the day when there, including minute calculations of expense, and warmly debated comparisons of the economy or costliness of various descriptions of refreshment.

At length, amid the still unabated clamour, a bell sounded, the doors of our prison were unbarred, and we all rushed pell-mell down the steps leading to the carriages. I clambered to one of the seats with which the roofs of some of the carriages are furnished: in

about five minutes, by dint of intense hurrying, running, screaming, pushing, and swearing, all had seated themselves in the carriages, a bugle sounded, and off we went at a very staid and sober pace.

We performed the distance, about thirteen miles, in forty minutes exactly, a degree of speed which quite as much exceeds that of the conveyances it has superseded, as the rate of travelling on our railways exceeds that of our best coaches.

But it is very much to be doubted whether France is yet sufficiently advanced in commercial energy, in general wealth and prosperity, and, above all, in confidence and security, to enable her to undertake such gigantic enterprizes as those of our railway companies with safety or advantage. No French company has yet been able to complete its operations without aid from the government. The truth is, that "la grande nation" has fallen into the mistake of that great Cornish giant, whose lamentable end has been recorded in the instructive chronicle of Jack the Giant-Killer, as a memorable warning against overweening ambition. Now this great giant, when he saw little Jack make away with an enormous and most enviable quantity of hasty-pudding, and immediately

afterwards disembarass himself of the load without inconvenience, exclaimed, as the veracious legend informs us, "Odds boddikins! hur can do that hursel!" And the unfortunate monster, in attempting to follow accurately the example of his subtle-witted adversary, "ripped up his own bowels."

This is an instructive parable, which might be recommended to the notice of our neighbours with advantage as regards some other matters, as well as their two railroads, one on each side of the Seine.

The terminus of the line at Versailles is about a mile from the chateau, and a number of conveyances of various descriptions were waiting to convey the passengers to the grand object of nearly all of them. I preferred, however, to walk; and when I arrived at the palace, I found that I had an hour and a half to dispose of before the Musée would be open, which it never is till eleven o'clock.

I first secured a place in, or rather on a huge vehicle, partaking of the nature of a diligence and an omnibus, which was to start for Rambouillet at one o'clock, and employed the rest of the time in a stroll among the stately alleys of the gardens, and the long, formal, half-deserted streets of noble mansions, which constitute this town, so vastly

too large and too magnificent for its present fortunes.

The melancholy Jacques found “sermons in stones;” and truly those which form these palaces so utterly “fallen, fallen, fallen from their great estate,” might furnish forth a thousand homilies on the preacher’s text—“Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!”

But let us quit these sombre contemplations, and turn we to the renascent splendours of the mighty pile, regilded, revarnished, painted over, and dedicated by a citizen-king to all the glories of his country: “A TOUTES LES GLOIRES DE LA FRANCE,” as two conspicuous inscriptions in huge bright lackered letters inform us, one on each wing of the building, in order that there may be no possible mistake about the matter.

“A TOUTES LES GLOIRES DE LA FRANCE!” Yes! there is the balcony from which Louis XVI. addressed the mob from Paris! there is the door before which the faithful Swiss was murdered; and there the stair by which Frenchmen, thirsting for blood, rushed into the chamber of a defenceless, unprotected woman, their queen!

“A TOUTES LES GLOIRES DE LA FRANCE!” Yes! There is Napoleon *visiting* the plague-stricken at Jaffa! And there is Louis Philippe laying

his hand on his heart, and swearing to observe and preserve “ la Charte.”

I had barely time to walk through the endless suites of interminable rooms, all filled with the pictured glories of France, and I should think a Frenchman must reel through them perfectly intoxicated with such a dose of glory.

I culled, however, a few other specimens of French glory, in addition to those above enumerated, in my hasty passage among them, such as portraits of Oliver Cromwell, Luther, Melancthon, Charles V. of Germany, &c. Louis XV. was there doing honour to his country in no less than sixteen different portraits. It is gratifying, too, to observe that his countrymen consider all his mistresses as so many glories of France.

If the external aspect of the town of Versailles conveys a lesson on the vanity of human ambition, the interior of the “ *monstre musée*” most certainly supplies a curious commentary on the quality and value of ambition’s reward.

In truth, one quits this huge “ *triomphe de l’art*,” as some one shrewdly and maliciously calls it, fatigued with promenading through its miles of galleries, with eyes aching from travelling over acres upon acres of gaudy

colouring — to examine which, if they were worth examination, would take a month at least—and with the mind and taste offended at the exceeding badness of the immense majority of the pictures.

My reflections, as I at length reached the exit of the last gallery, were analogous to those of the children, who say, “ If all the ponds in the world were made into one large pond, what a great big pond that would be ! and if all the hills in the world were made into one large hill, what a very great big hill that would be ! ”

There are, however, one or two articles, amid the heterogeneous assemblage, which have interest enough to deserve a particular mention, and which merit a better fate than to be lost amid the wilderness of lumber which surrounds them. The principal of these is the Princess Mary's well-known statue of the Maid of Orleans. It stands in a long gallery filled with statues, some in marble and some in plaster, of personages of every description who figure in French history, and enjoys no distinction of any kind to mark it among the miscellaneous crowd around, except that which it derives from its own intrinsic excellence. But it is impossible that the most uneducated eye should pass it by without being

arrested by the admirably combined grace and dignity of the figure. Nothing can be more happily chosen than the attitude of the person, and the expression of the slightly bent and thoughtful features. An infinity of maidenly modesty is blended with the high resolve and unflinching firmness which spring evidently from no unwomanly boldness of natural character, but from a deep undoubting faith in the reality of her mission, and a devout reliance on God for the power to carry it into execution.

It is difficult not to believe that the extraordinarily-gifted princess, who could thus conceive the character of the "maid of France," and thus give existence to the beau ideal of her mind, could herself have been the heroine she has portrayed, had her lot been cast in those days of mighty impulses, of unquestioning, energetic faith, and heroic deeds.

There are also two or three good historical pictures by Schœffer, and a few of Rigaud's portraits, scattered among the heterogenous hundreds with which the upper rooms are filled, no sort of order being observed apparently in the arrangement of them, except such as was necessary to make them fit, so as not to leave a foot of wall uncovered.

By the time it was one o'clock I was very

ready to mount to my place on the top of the diligence to proceed to Rambouillet. The distance is ten leagues, which we performed in the very short space of three hours, for the very small sum of one franc—both speed and cheapness being attributable to that most salutary improver of all things, competition.

The drive is not an interesting one, the country passed through being for the most part flat, and lying low. I observed two or three extensive pieces of water, which, from their stagnant appearance, and the general features of the country, seemed to enhance the dreary and marshy character of the scene, rather than relieve it by any beauty of their own.

St. Cyr, with its college, built by the celebrated Mansard in one year, by dint of employing two thousand five hundred workmen, does not deserve, *maugre* the great names connected with it, more than a passing glance. Poor Madame de Maintenon! She little thought that her cherished foundation for two hundred and fifty “*demoiselles nobles*” would so soon be changed into a school for officers of infantry! She died there, and was buried in the choir of the church, hoping doubtless to profit by the prayers of successive generations of her protégées—a service of

gratitude which she will hardly receive from the present occupants of her premises.

We arrived at Rambouillet at four o'clock, and I persuaded the driver and proprietor of a little "voiture commissionaire," which was about to start for Epernon, to defer his departure for half an hour, while I walked to the gloomy-looking old chateau, and round the miserable-looking extent of barren sandy ground in front of it, which serves as a barrack-yard to some recently-built cavalry barracks, but which the Rambouillians tenaciously persist in terming "Le Parc."

The edifice, as it now exists, consists of two masses of dingy red brick building, so placed as to form a right angle. At the extremity of one of them is a large, battlemented, round, stone tower, of apparently much older construction. The whole appearance of the place, with its entourage of dreary, sandy park, is a perfect picture of gloom and cheerless ugliness, and suits well with the melancholy nature of the reminiscences attached to the spot. It was from Rambouillet that the young Napoleon departed for Austria, when quitting for ever the country of his affections and his hopes. It was within the gloomy walls of this same old chateau that the unfortunate Charles IX. and his son

signed the act of their abdication in 1830; and from hence that they departed, with the young Henry, on their melancholy way to Cherbourg.

The town contains nothing which can in any way interest a traveller; and the chateau is by no means worth stopping for, unless to him who can find an interest in gazing on walls which have been so sadly tenanted.

Beyond Rambouillet the country improves in character. It is less flat, and better cultivated, with a much larger proportion of arable land.

The commissioner, in whose voiture I was journeying, seemed to be a most invaluable man in the country. Manifold were his duties, and most punctually executed they seemed to be. It appeared to be quite as much his vocation to carry news as more solid articles. Messages were delivered and inquiries made, relative to all sorts of domestic matters, at various roadside dwellings. Sometimes commissions were intrusted to him, which seemed to require no little delicacy and discretion. One old woman, for instance, ran out of her house as he passed, bawling to him to bring her some ipecacuanha from Epernon.

“Well! How much then?” bawled this incomparable Mercury.

“ Oh, enough for one dose,” was the reply.

“ What! for yourself?” rejoined the messenger.

“ Non! Grace à Dieu! pour ma fille.”

“ Bon? Mais il faut le savoir; parce que, voyez vous, c’est different.”

It was nearly dark by the time we arrived at Epernon, for my phœnix of a “commis-sionnaire” had the road all to himself, and consequently did not think it necessary to hurry either himself or his horse, but stopped to drink a “coup de vin” here, and to gossip awhile with the goodwife there, with an utter disregard whether we arrived an hour or two sooner or later.

Epernon is a town of more than fifteen hundred inhabitants, and is only fourteen leagues from Paris; and yet it was with difficulty that I found a bed and supper at all, and when found, they were very little better than some of the worst cabarets in the most secluded parts of Brittany had afforded me.

One of the peculiarities of Paris, which forcibly strikes an Englishman, accustomed to see and feel the influence of London for a distance of thirty or forty miles all round it, is the very trifling degree in which it radiates the vital warmth of which it is the depository, or vivifies the surrounding districts. Once

beyond the little suburban villages, whose cafés and guinguettes are thronged with holiday-making Parisians, and all signs of the near neighbourhood of Paris disappear.

I did at length persuade the barefooted landlady of the best-looking cabaret I could find, to put a pair of clean sheets on a miserable straw mattress, and to make me an omelet to eat with the sandy bread, which was the best the place afforded. But she did it sulkily and unwillingly, and seemed by no means anxious for my custom.

I secured my place overnight in a little unpretending sort of omnibus, which was to leave Epernon for Chartres at six in the morning. But, as it was light by five, and as my bed held out no temptations to remain in it at all longer than was absolutely necessary, I was up and dressed by that time, and set forth to employ the hour which I thus won in a survey of the little town.

Epernon gained its present name from the odious minion of Henry III., in whose favour it was erected into a dukedom by that most contemptible monarch. It is picturesquely placed on the side of a steep hill, which it covers with a mass of irregular buildings thrown together in utter defiance of any thing like order, and which, mixed as they

are with sundry scattered morsels of ruins of the former feudal constructions of the place—walls, gateways, turrets, &c.—might afford materials for a sketch or two. The town, when walled, must have been exceedingly small and closely packed ; as all the part which now lies at the bottom of the hill, and forms along the highroad one long, straggling street, constituting the best part of the town, is of modern date.

The top of the hill rises considerably above the town, and that so immediately over it, that, even before the use of gunpowder, it must have afforded very considerable advantages to a besieging party, and much lessened the value of the place as a fortress. The limestone rock, of which the hill consists, pierces the thin coat of sod which covers it, in several parts near the top, and some small quarries were worked there.

From the top of this hill I distinguished very plainly the two spires of Chartres cathedral, rising sharp and well defined in outline in the clear horizon, at the distance of eighteen miles.

Towards them I now set forwards, after having in vain attempted to obtain at this most inhospitable of towns a cup of milk to stand in the place of breakfast till I should

arrive at Chartres, which was not to be till ten o'clock.

At two leagues from Epernon we passed Maintenon, which gave its name to Françoise d'Aubigné, when that remarkable woman, "devenue incognito reine de France," as a French writer has it, received from her royal lover the title of "marquise," together with the estate and lordship of Maintenon.

We had to await here the arrival of the voiture from Nogent-le-roi; and this afforded me time to run down to the chateau, which stands at the farther end of the town. It now belongs to the Duc de Broglie, and looks like a fine picturesque old country house.

The buildings form three sides of a square, the open side being turned towards the garden, which is well laid out à l'Anglaise. Across the valley, at the bottom of the garden, and forming a most picturesque ornament to the grounds, run the ruins of that colossal aqueduct undertaken by Louis XIV. to bring the waters of the Eure to Versailles. Nature, however, in this instance, beat the Grand Monarque, though he beat her at Versailles; and the work was obliged to be abandoned, after having cost several millions of francs and many lives. The enormous pillars, however, which were to have supported the

river in its passage from hill to hill, still remain like the giant side of some mighty ruined nave, and are likely so to do for many a generation yet to come, monuments at the same time of the monarch's failure, and of the audacious boldness of the attempt.

Many a piquant anecdote of court scandal, and many a history of state intrigue, are connected with the chambers of this fine old house; but, as I returned to the voiture from my flying visit, to pursue my breakfastless way to Chartres, I confess that the association of ideas, so apt to connect themselves in our minds with names of historic interest, suggested nought to my fasting thoughts but peculiarly vivid visions of Maintenon cutlets.

It was half past ten o'clock when we reached Chartres. I hasten to relieve the reader's sympathy by assuring him that I fell in with a company on the point of sitting down to a good "table d'hôte;" and this satisfactorily understood, we will allow Chartres a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER III.

Chartres—The Cathedral—Exterior—The West Front—Early History of the Church—Druids at Chartres—Druidical Temple there—Singular Tradition—Consideration of its Possible Foundation in Truth—First Destruction of the Cathedral by Fire—Nature of the Second Building—Second Destruction by Fire—Third—The Rebuilding; a Scene from the Life of the Middle Ages—Construction of the New Steeple—Curious Inscription—Fire in the Cathedral in 1836—The New Roof—The Interior of the Church—Painted Windows—Different Periods of the Art of Painting on Glass—Rose Windows—Walk on the Banks of the Eure—View of the City—A Twilight Hour in the Cathedral.

THE cathedral of Chartres, which has always had the reputation of being one of the finest in France, was the principal attraction which had induced me to quit Paris by the route described in the last chapter, instead of reaching the Loire at Orleans, its nearest point to the capital, by the direct road to that city.

I lost no time, therefore, before visiting it, as soon as the still more pressing necessity for breakfast had been satisfied.

The position of the church, on the highest

point of the isolated eminence on which the town is built, is superb; and the two noble spires, though labouring, alas! under that almost universal and most important defect, want of uniformity, are imposing and majestic. Yet I cannot but own that my first feeling on lifting up my eyes to the mighty mass as I stood before the west front was one of disappointment.

Our truant imagination *will* thus always outstrip realities and throw real beauties into the shade, by the abuse of its own boundless powers of creation!

A more deliberate and minute survey in a great measure corrected this first impression, and discovered numerous striking, and some peculiar beauties. Nevertheless, I am still inclined to think that Chartres cathedral is more to be admired for detached details of great beauty, and some of architectural curiosity, than as a perfect whole.

The west front is, in comparison with the other parts of the church, singularly simple and unornamented, with the exception of the rich work around the porches of the three great doors, which evidently dates from a later period.

The rest of the west front, with the "clocher vieux," as the shorter and plainer of the

two steeples is termed, is of a date as early as the twelfth century, having been completed in 1145. The principal part of the building, indeed, dates from the same epoch.

The history of its construction at that period affords us one of those graphic peeps into the mode of life and ways of thinking and acting of those days, which are only to be obtained here and there from records written by their authors, and preserved by their successors for far other purposes.

The idea of leaving on record, for the benefit of their descendants, a picture of manners, written as such, was for the vanity of a later and less actively occupied age.

But the building, preservation, and fortunes of their churches, were naturally the facts considered most interesting and most worthy of being handed down to posterity by the ecclesiastical historians of the middle ages; and Chartres is peculiarly rich in curious documents of this description.

The origin of the church is sought by its historians amid the darkness of a period long antecedent to the first certain lights of history.

It might be thought, perhaps, by the simple-minded reader, that the antiquity of a Christian church must at least be bounded by the advent of our Saviour, and the origin of

Christianity. But the Chartres antiquarians have not been satisfied with any such restricted period for their researches.

It is well known that the whole of the "pays Chartrain" was one of the strongholds of Druidism. The forest, which once covered the wide-spreading corn-fields of "La Beauce," as this district was called at a later period, was one of their most sacred haunts. A college of Druid priests, supposed with good grounds to have been the seat of the supreme authority for all Gaul, dwelt and worshipped on the hill on which Chartres now stands. And though circumstances have not been so favourable to their preservation here as in the secluded wilds of Brittany, yet numerous monuments of their worship and traces of their sojourn may be found scattered throughout the whole of the ancient country of the Carnutes, the pays Chartrain of the middle ages.

There is no reason for doubting the ancient tradition, which points to the site of the present cathedral as the spot where the principal Druid temple existed. I have mentioned in my volumes on Brittany several curious instances in which the new religion had availed itself of the superstitious reverence felt by its new converts for the spots consecrated by

the old faith. The choice of such a locality, moreover, as that in question, would be consonant to the habits and ideas of the worshippers of either faith.

“Les premiers autels,” says an erudite French writer on the subject, “les premiers temples, furent généralement érigés sur des hauteurs. Dans les siècles d’ignorance, l’homme, considérant les sommets des montagnes comme des points intermédiaires entre la terre et le ciel, crut, en s’élevant, s’approcher de la Divinité; et, par une conséquence naturelle, de simples éminences furent, dans des pays peu montueux, les lieux de prédilection pour l’érection des monuments religieux.”

And no one at all conversant with Christian antiquity need be reminded how favourite a spot for the erection of their churches were the summits of eminences among the early Christians.

When, therefore, the Chartrain historians inform us that the cavern destined to the celebration of Druid rites was comprised in the plan of the foundations of the present church, there is little reason to doubt the fact. But it is more startling to find a uniform and constant tradition, which asserts that, in this cavern, or “grotte,” was an altar, on which, long before the birth of our

Saviour, was a figure of a female, with the inscription, VIRGINI PARITURÆ. Of course the inscription thus written could have dated only from the invasion of Gaul by the Romans. But the old historians probably give it only as a translation of the Celtic inscription to the same purpose.

This ancient tradition, preserved, attested, and accredited, after the fashion of their day, by a host of old chroniclers, became the subject of sundry learned discussions and dubitations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, after the fashion of *their* day. Those who are curious in such matters may consult an old octavo volume of 1088 pages, printed at Paris in the year 1609, and intituled “ Parthénie, or Histoire de la très avguste et très dévotte Eglise de Chartres ; dédiée par les vieux Drvides, en l’honneur de la Vierge qui enfanteroit, par M^e Sébastien Rovliard de Melvn, aduocat en Parlement.”

The lawyer is a believer ; but the tradition will doubtless be summarily disposed of as a monkish imposture by us wise folks of the nineteenth century, after the fashion of *our* day. And yet it might possibly deserve some little attention, before it is altogether rejected as worthless and unprofitable.

If a well-attested and uniform tradition had

declared that such an altar with such an inscription had existed in the wilderness of Judea, or on the banks of the Jordan, should we instantly declare it incredible? Would it not, on the contrary, have appeared a not improbable consequence of the singularly striking prophecy of Isaiah? And I confess that I cannot see any impossibility, or even any high degree of improbability, in the supposition that the same prophecy may have found its way, at a very early period, to the Druids of Chartres. We know how intimate a correspondence was maintained between the continental Druids and those of Britain. We know Cornwall to have been one of their especial haunts; and indeed the entire character and features of that peninsula are peculiarly adapted to their wants and habits. And, lastly, we know that the Phenicians traded to Cornwall for tin, and might well have conveyed some facts and ideas of Eastern origin to these mystery-loving priests of the West.

However this may be, Chartres has always considered itself as peculiarly under the protection of the Virgin, and bound to honour her with peculiar worship. The first church which existed in this part of Gaul was dedicated to her in this city about the end of the third century. This building shared the fate of a great number—probably the majority—

of the religious edifices of that period. It was burnt by the Normans in the year 858. This was its first burning.

It was rebuilt in the manner most in use in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries: that is, a number of large trunks of trees, split lengthways down the middle, were fixed upright in the earth, at equal and very small distances from each other. The rough sides, with the bark on, were turned outwards, and the flat surface presented by the section inwards. Two rows of these rude pillars thus arranged were placed opposite to each other. The interstices between them were filled with earth; and a roof of thatch, thrown across from one of the walls thus formed to the other, completed the rustic nave of those primitive cathedrals, which served as centres, whence, strong in simple faith, went forth the spirit which was to humanize and civilize the nation.

This second cathedral was a second time burnt down in the year 962, in the wars between Thibaud-le-*Tricheur*, count of Chartres, and Richard, duke of Normandy.

Does the reader, par parenthèse, remember a ballad in Bishop Percy's collection—one of the oldest there—beginning—

“ Richard! Richard!
Thou wast always *trichard*,
Trichen shalt thou never more!”

Robert-le-Tricheur, then, who was a noted knight of that period, and is never spoken of by any other name, could not prevent the justice of his contemporaries from handing him down to all posterity as a knave.

Whether it was to any *treachery* of his that Chartres owed the second demolition of its cathedral, does not appear. It seems, however, to have been once more rebuilt, for we find that it was a third time destroyed by fire on the eve of the Nativity of the Virgin, the seventh of September, in the year 1020. This misfortune was supposed to have been occasioned by lightning. And from this period dates the commencement of the building, which is still one of the most admired churches in Europe.

It is of this rebuilding that we have so graphic and picturesque an account, extracted from various sources by M. Gilbert, one of the historians of the cathedral.

Fulbert, a prelate of great reputation throughout Europe, and a prodigy of learning and sanctity, at that time held the see of Chartres. He had studied under the celebrated Gerbert of Aurillac, who afterwards became pope under the title of Sylvester II., and whose great learning caused him to be deemed a profound proficient in the black art.

Fulbert had interest with most of the princes of his day, and he exerted it to the utmost to obtain assistance for the restoration of his cathedral on a scale of magnificence before unattempted.

The kings of France, England, and Denmark, Eudes, count of Chartres, Richard, duke of Normandy, and William, duke of Aquitaine, all gave large sums towards the building. Animated by these examples, and by the exhortations of their bishop, the whole body of artizans of every description in the town gave up their whole time and labour to the good work ; and those who had no skill to bring brought at least the labour of their hands, and dragged stones from the quarry, and timber from the forest, or brought food for the workmen. Large bodies of men from Rouen, and the other cities of Normandy, sought the benediction of their bishops, and, departing as on a crusade, flocked to Chartres to assist in the pious labours. Each troop of pilgrims chose themselves a chief, under whose directions they laboured at whatever was most urgent to be done. So great was the excitement of energy and zeal throughout the country, that men of all classes and professions might be found among the labourers,

performing the most servile and laborious tasks.

It was impossible for so large a concourse to be accommodated in the houses of the town, more especially as a great part of it had perished in the same fire which destroyed the church. The whole body of workmen remained, therefore, day and night around the walls of the rising cathedral; and when they gathered round their fires at nightfall to partake of their evening meal, and rest their limbs to prepare for the morrow's toil, they would sing together before they slept a hymn, whose swelling chorus might be heard far away by the lone habitants of the few huts which were scattered at wide distances over the forest, which then surrounded the hill on which the town is built.

So delighted was the good Archbishop of Rouen, who went to Chartres to see how they were getting on, and so carried away with enthusiasm at the edifying sight, that he declares, and doubtless believed, that all those who had left his city sick returned from their pious labours perfectly recovered.

Thus was accomplished the noble building, which has for seven hundred years formed the principal ornament and pride of the pays Chartrain. It must not be supposed, how-

ever, that the good Fulbert lived to see the completion of it. He died on the tenth of April, in the year 1029, eight years after the commencement of the building. A little before his death he wrote to William, duke of Aquitaine, that, "by the grace and assistance of God, he had already completed the crypts of his church." It was not finished till about the middle of the twelfth century.

The church of Chartres would seem to be destined to perish by the flames, for twice since the above-mentioned period the building has been on fire.

On the sixth of July, in the year 1506, the lightning struck the northern spire, which was then only of wood, covered with lead, and entirely consumed it, melting six bells which were in it. It was rebuilt of stone, in its present beautiful proportions, by the contributions of the faithful. Louis XII. gave two thousand livres, a sum equal to about seven or eight thousand francs of the present day. Jean Texier, inhabitant of Chartres, was the architect. He received six or seven sous a day, and his workmen five, and he completed the spire in seven years, beginning in 1507, and finishing it in 1514. In the new steeple is a large white stone, bearing, in gothic let-

ter, the following inscription. The steeple speaks.

“ Je fus jadis de plomb et bois construit,
Grand, hault, et beau, et de somptueux ouvrage,
Jusques a ce que tonnerre et orage
M’ha consommé dévasté et détruiet.

“ Le jour de saint Anne, vers six heures de nuit
En l’an compté mille cinq cens et six
Je fus bruslé, demoli et recuit,
Et avec moi de grosses eloches six.

Après Messieurs en plein Chapitre assis
Ont ordonné de pierre me refaire,
A grand voulte, et pilliers bien massifs,
Par Jehan de Beaulse, ouvrier qui le sceut faire.”

Some other lines follow, which are less to the purpose.

This fourth fire was not the last from which this unlucky fabric was fated to suffer. On the evening of the fourth of June, 1836, the cathedral was once more on fire. The accident originated, as so many others of the same description have, in the carelessness of workmen employed in repairs of the roof.

I talked to several persons who were present on that memorable night, and received several accounts, all substantially the same, of the conflagration. But I despair of being able to convey to the reader’s mind the same vivid idea of the tremendous scene, and of the emotions which agitated the city, which the narrative of these eye-witnesses, aided as it was by the presence of all the localities referred to, imparted to me.

It was about six o'clock in the evening that it was known throughout the town that the cathedral was on fire. The consternation was extreme. All rushed towards the church, and the inhabitants of the neighbouring streets added to the indescribable confusion by hastening to empty their houses of every thing moveable, and carry it to places of safety.

It very soon became evident that there was no hope of saving any portion of the enormous roof. The immense framework which supported the lead was entirely of chestnut, and was popularly termed in the town "the forest," from the vast quantity of wood it contained. Nothing could be conceived more adapted for burning than this vast forest of huge dry beams; and the intensity of the fire was terrific.

At eight o'clock the smoke was seen to issue from the northern spire. It was impossible to do any thing to check the flames here. The vast height, and the difficulty, or rather impossibility, of approaching the building, vomiting forth flames of the greatest intensity in every direction, reduced the unhappy Chartrains to look on in helpless despair at the threatened destruction of this highly-prized and much-vaunted ornament of their town.

By this time the entire population of the neighbouring communes had arrived, and if human power or labour could have availed aught, the cathedral would not have been destroyed for want of bold efforts or ready hands. For the country people around are extremely attached to the venerable fabric which connects itself with all their earliest and dearest recollections.

Thousands of anxious eyes and beating hearts, therefore, were now gazing on a spectacle, which, to an indifferent spectator, if such there could be, would have been one of the grandest and most splendid which can be conceived.

The whole of the wooden framework in the interior of the spire had become ignited. The roaring of the fire amid its abundant aliment, excited to the utmost fury by the powerful thorough draft which rushed in upon it from every aperture and window of the fabric, was awfully audible over the whole town.

Presently the flames burst forth from every outlet, and the entire spire was a colossal pyramid of light. The delicate stonework of its lace-like ornaments became suddenly illuminated, so as to be visible in their minutest details, with a sort of unnatural distinctness, which the broadest light of day

would fail to produce. Far and wide over the town and along the valley of the Eure flashed that baleful light, peering into every remotest corner of the affrighted town, flashing on every roof, playing as in ferocious sport and mockery upon every window, and shewing painfully distinct to every man his neighbour's face, haggard with dismay and apprehension.

And the stronger sentiment of self began now to turn men's thoughts from the public misfortune to fears each for his own house and home. For great apprehensions were entertained that the vast edifice of the spire would itself yield to the intense action of the fire, and spread ruin far and wide in his fall. The whole of the thickly populated quarter of the lower part of the town, too, was considered to be in imminent danger. For a strong wind blew the flames and burning fragments in that direction, and it seemed almost a miracle that it escaped.

Yet what could be done? Nothing! The spectators were denied even the consolation of activity—of striving to avert the calamity, and were forced to await the result in silence, broken only by those inarticulate sounds which indicate the vacillating emotions of a vast multitude, as each alternation of hope and fear predominates.

For a long time the bells were seen hanging red hot amidst the burning beams, as the immense timbers which supported them yielded but slowly even to the force of the raging element which was preying upon them. At length, however, with an awful crash they fell to the bottom of the spire, bearing down before them the whole mass of half consumed blazing timbers below them.

From that time the fire was confined to the bottom of the steeple; and it is probable that to this cause the ultimate safety of the spire was due.

Scarcely, however, had the fears of the town for the safety of this spire abated, before the other, the southern, or "vieux clocher," was discovered to be on fire. It was expected that this would surely fall, for an erroneous notion had long been prevalent in the town that it was in an infirm state. The venerable stones, however, so cunningly put together by the old architects of the twelfth century, stood the fierce test as bravely as the more recent workmanship of "Maitre Jehan Texier de Beaulse" had done. And when the ponderous woodwork of the frame was at length consumed, the fire died away, and left the stone pyramid victorious.

One phenomenon, however, took place during

the burning of this steeple, of which the effect must have far surpassed that of the finest firework ever invented. Unlike the other, this spire consists almost entirely of a simple cone, without any windows or apertures whatsoever, except a small one at the top. When the fire, therefore, was raging in the interior of this cone, being blown up to great intensity by a stream of air, like that in a blast furnace, rushing in at the bottom and passing out at the small aperture at the top, the concentrated flame, finding no other vent, passed through this, and shot upwards to the sky in one unbroken fiery column, to the immense height of seventy-five feet. For many and many leagues around that portentous light must have been seen with astonishment by those who were too distant then to have ascertained the cause of it.

The old steeple was the last part of the edifice in which the fire raged. It was towards morning when all fears for the safety of the stonework ceased; and thus ended a night, which will be remembered and talked of in Chartres long after the generation which witnessed it has passed away.

The repairs were all but finished when I visited it. The new framework of the roof is entirely of iron, and is well worth seeing,

as an admirable and colossal chef d'œuvre of united strength and lightness. The frame is entirely covered with plates of copper, and the total expense of this new roof must have been immense.

I was more struck with the first coup d'œil of the interior of Chartres cathedral, than I had been with the exterior. It has, I grieve to say, the distressing drawback of a most hideous colour, every inch of wall, pillar, and arch, from the pavement to the vault, having been most sedulously washed with yellow ochre!

The proportions, however, are fine, and the display of painted windows superb. These are, in point of fact, the grand feature of the cathedral, which in this respect must, I think, take rank before any other church I have ever seen. The much-vaunted windows of Rouen are possibly superior as specimens of the art, but they are so much fewer in number that the general effect is not to be compared with that produced at Chartres.

I counted a hundred and thirty perfect windows of the richest colours and designs, besides a great number in which parts have been supplied with common glass. These are almost all of the early period of the art, painted probably in the course of the thir-

teenth century. The subjects of the greatest part of them are portraits of the benefactors who contributed towards the re-edification of the church. But as these were not only princes and great men, but whole classes of trades and professions, as has been related, so among the portraitures of kings in their robes, and belted knights, and noble dames, will be found a variety of designs emblematical of the various crafts who assisted in the work, either by contribution or by manual labour.

However barbarous it may appear to some, I must confess that I prefer the painted glass of this early date to the improved drawing to be found in those of the second period of the art. It is true that the deep unshaded colours, the small figures which appear subordinate and of secondary importance to the forms of the pattern, and the absence of all apparent pretension of resemblance to the various objects represented, render the whole window more like a rich carpet than a picture. Granted! But who looks for an effective picture in a painted window? The large figures, the improvement in the arts of design and pictorial composition in the works of the "maitres verriers" of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, do not compensate to my eye for the poverty of effect occasioned by

their more transparent colouring, and large spaces of background, or white drapery, either uncoloured or coloured grey. What I love in the productions of these forgotten artists of a lost craft, is the gorgeous richness of the tout ensemble, the mellow-coloured light, reproducing the quaint design in fainter tints and fickle playfulness on pavement, wall, and pillar, and the perfect exclusion of even a sun-beam from the work-a-day world without, until it has been clothed in the grotesquely gay livery of the middle age, and compelled to assume a gothic air, in accordance with the character of the place.

Chartres possesses three very fine and splendidly-coloured rose windows, one at the west end of the nave, and one at the extremity of either transept, which add not a little to the splendour of the general effect. I could have fancied, as I looked from one to another of them, that they were the mimic illusions of some gigantic kaleidoscope.

Chartres has little to shew of interest except its cathedral. I took a walk in the evening along the bank of the Eure, which bathes the foot of the hill on the eastern side of the town. This seems to be the favourite walk of the Chartrains, and it is the side from which the town appears to most advantage. There

are some remains of ancient walls, one fine old gate, called the "Porte Guillaume," two or three bridges over the sluggish little river, and as many steeples of old churches emerging here and there from the mass of irregular roofs which cover the hill-side.

Each of these are in themselves to a certain degree picturesque, and I looked about to see if a spot could be found from which, with the towering spires of the cathedral for the principal object, a sketch might be made of them. But they would not group together at all kindly. So, passing through the "Porte Guillaume," I found my way up the hill, which is exceedingly steep on this side, through a labyrinth of twisting turning lanes, which must be inaccessible to any thing but a very sure-footed pedestrian, and, returning to the cathedral, went and sat me down on a bench under the wall at the west end of the nave.

Somebody was playing on the organ—a pupil of the organist's, I believe—whose tyro strains were quite sufficient at that time and place to charm my uncritical ears. So I sat listening to him, and looking at the rays of the setting sun pouring in many coloured streams through the windows of the choir, and thinking of William of Deloraine's visit

to Michael Scott's tomb, and considering how much things had changed outside those walls, and how little inside them since the dark benighted days when an excited populace had *raised* them, till twilight had passed into darkness. A silence as profound as that of the grave had succeeded to the roll of the organ, and still I mused on, till the bang of a distant door, echoing like thunder along the empty aisles, as the sexton went his rounds to shut up for the night, startled me into the timely reflection that the stone bench I was sitting on would make but a cold and hard bed, and that it was high time to go home to my inn "to bed—perchance to" supper.

CHAPTER IV.

The Advantages of Ascending High Towers—Prospect over La Beauce—Corn Market at Chartres—Female Corporation—Mode of Transacting Business at Chartres—Church of St. Aignan—Church of St. Pierre—Journey to Orleans—Vineyards of the Orleanais—Their Produce—The Story of Jacques Boulay, a warning to Authors—First View of the Loire—The Bridge—The Old Bridge—A Legend of its History—Epigram on the Opening of the New Bridge—Orleans from the other side of the River.

MY usual practice on finding myself in any town for the first time is to betake myself forthwith to the top of the highest tower it can boast, and I can conscientiously recommend all travellers to follow herein my example. It is a compendious and pleasing mode of studying geography; it gives you an opportunity of having a little instructive conversation with the sexton, who is in nine cases out of ten, according to my experience, the best informed man of his class in the place; and lastly, if the expedition is undertaken, as it ought to be, before breakfast, it furnishes you with an adequate appetite for that morning meal.

In the present instance, however, I was so wholly occupied with examining and admiring the building, that I neglected to climb to the top of it till the second morning of my stay at Chartres. And I must confess that if I wished to impress on a tyro the utility of the practice I have been recommending, I would not take him to the top of Chartres tower to begin with ; for a more monotonous and uninteresting prospect I never saw.

And yet it enabled me to form a much more accurate notion of the character of the "pays Chartrain" than I could have obtained in any other manner. Large open cornfields, mixed with a very small proportion of pasture or meadow land, stretch away to the distant horizon in every direction. One or two small bits of forest may be distinguished in the extreme distance, and a few villages in some degree break the monotony of the extensive panorama.

Wheat is the staple produce of "La Beauce," and its productive plains are the principal granary of the capital. Hence it arises that the Beauceron is usually better off in the world than the generality of French peasants.

There is a corn-market every Saturday at Chartres, the most important in France, with

the exception of Paris. It is worth visiting for the sake of seeing the operations of the women, to whom the entire duty of measuring the corn, delivering it to the buyers, receiving the price, and paying it over to the sellers, is confided. These women are more expressively than elegantly termed "leveuses de culs-de-poche;" poche signifying in the dialect of La Beauce the sack in which the grain is brought to market. These women form an organized corporation, which has existed for several centuries. They enjoy a reputation for the strictest integrity, which is indeed sufficiently attested by the fact that the whole transactions of the market, as above stated, are entrusted to them. Nor are they under any surveillance whatsoever. The buyer and seller alike put implicit confidence in them. The latter, when he has pitched his corn, leaves it entirely in their hands, goes about his business or pleasure in the town, and returns in the evening to receive the amount of the sale, without making any inquiries or taking any farther trouble about it. The amount of confidence placed in the honesty of these women, and the importance of the charge confided to them, may be estimated from the fact that ten thousand quintals of corn is by no means an unusual quantity to change hands in one

market-day at Chartres, the whole of which is invariably disposed of for ready money, paid on the spot.

I spent the rest of the day in lounging about the town and its environs, and visiting two or three parish churches. That of St. Aignan has several painted windows, belonging to the second period of the art, in good preservation. Another, dedicated to St. Peter, is still richer in them. This church formerly belonged to a monastery much patronized by many of the earlier bishops of Chartres. There are several mural tablets commemorating the fact of sundry of them having been buried here, but their monuments have perished. Robert, Archbishop of Rouen, son of Richard I., Duke of Normandy, also lies here. The circular end of the choir in this church has six very richly painted lancet windows, and several others of a more recent period in different parts of the building.

I left Chartres the next morning for Orleans, which I reached after about ten hours of very uninteresting travelling. We passed the little village of Berchères, from whose calcareous quarries was drawn the peculiarly hard stone with which the cathedral is built, and which still supply the wants of the town. Journey-

ing hence through the rich corn-lands of La Beauce, we reached the limit of the department, having accomplished about two-thirds of the distance between the two capitals. Entering the department of Loiret, we traversed in a direction due south a country of very similar description to that of the Eure et Loire. On entering the Orleanais, the corn begins to give place to the vine. The department produces nearly equal quantities of corn and wine; the principal parts of the former coming from the districts bordering on the Eure et Loire, the Seine et Oise, and the Seine et Marne.

Along the banks of the Loire, wine is the staple produce. Orleans, Beaugency, and Blois, alone produce on the average annually about two hundred thousand pieces of wine. The average value of this produce is thirty francs the piece, on the spot; at Paris it is worth about fifty-five. The piece differs somewhat in different parts of the country. That of Orleans is the largest used, and contains about three hundred and twenty bottles. That of Bordeaux holds three hundred.

About half this annual produce of wine is consumed as such. It is rarely bottled, but is sold from the tap in the cabarets and wine houses of Paris. The other half is made

into vinegar or brandy. The most esteemed growths of the environs are those of St. Jean de Braye, St. Denis en Val, and St. Jean de la Ruelle.

The best account of the vineyards of this part of France, and of the modes of culture adopted in them, may be found in a volume entitled "Le Vigneron Français," printed at Orleans in 1723. It was written by Jacques Boulay, canon of St. Pierre en Pont, and contains, among other matters, so faithful an account of the frauds and adulterations practised by the growers and sellers, that tradition says he was one fine morning found hung up in the midst of his own vineyard, as an example to all men of the consequences of telling tales out of school.

Immediately on reaching Orleans, after securing a bed at the hotel de France in the Place du Martroy, I hastened down to the river, and was a good deal disappointed with the first sight of it. The Loire unquestionably cannot be called a fine river at Orleans. Its broad, shallow stream is divided by large islands of sands, which entirely destroy the appearance of it. Ugly in themselves, they prevent the mass of water which finds its way among them from producing the effect of a mighty stream, by breaking the unity of it,

and presenting to the eye two or three mesquin, low-banked streamlets, instead of one large river.

The bridge is a fine one of nine arches. It is three hundred and fifty paces long, and thirteen broad. It succeeded to a very ancient construction of nineteen arches, which some of the provincial antiquarians insist upon attributing to the Romans, maintaining that this was the bridge mentioned by Cæsar as connecting Genabum with the country of the Bituriges. But there is good reason for believing that the little town of Gien, which is situated in the eastern part of the department, a good deal higher up the river, occupies the site of the ancient Genabum. And certain ancient documents are in existence respecting the right of passage over the old bridge, from which it should seem that it was built at the joint expense of Orleans and the ancient bourg of Avenum.

This bridge was the scene of a memorable and disastrous fight on the sixth and seventh of May, in the year 1429. The English had entrenched themselves in a little fortress called "les tourelles," situated at the head of the bridge, on the opposite side of the river. The redoubtable Pucelle had arrived in Orleans on the 29th of April, and the next day

summoned "Glacidas," the English captain, to surrender. "Mais Glacidas et ses gens lui respondirent avec plusieurs injures atroces, l'appelant vachère et ribaude, et crians tout haut qu'ils la feroient arder s'ils la pouvoient tenir."

Jane, therefore, in company with the Bastard of Orleans, La Hire, the Lord of Graville, and many other noble knights, and squires of low degree, marched out of the town at break of day, and advanced to the attack. The English sallied out to meet them, but were, after an obstinate fight, driven back with much loss, and were obliged "se retirer dans leur fort des tourelles, et dans leur grand bastion nommé Londres." This bastion was then taken; and the French leaders would have followed up their advantages by attacking the "tourelles." "Mais la Pucelle fut d'avis, que e'toit assez pour ce jour."

The next morning, Saturday, she returned to the attack, crying to the troops as she pointed with the standard she carried, to the enemy on the walls of the fort, "Allons! Allons! ils sont a nous, puisque Dieu est pour nous! ils ne peuvent échapper la main de Dieu."

The fort was, after some hard fighting, taken, and the loss of the English was very

great. “ Les uns sont tuez sur la place, et les autres noyez dans la riviere de Loire ; et y moururent bien des Anglois jusqu’au nombre de cinq cens combattans. Nul ne fut épargné que les seuls prêtres par le commandement de la Pucelle.” “ Ce brave Glacidas toujours accoustumé à vaincre abandonna son quartier, et se jetta en la basse cour des tourelles.”

But the misfortunes of the English were not yet come to an end. A large body, comprising many “ chevaliers, bannerets, et nobles d’Angleterre,” attempted to escape across the bridge. But “ comme ils pensoient de sauver leur vie, le pont, desja fort ébranlé par les bombardes, éprouvé par le feu, et de surcroist extrêmement chargé par la pesanteur de cette foule, fondit sous eux, et s’enfonçant dans l’eau d’un effroiabie bruit attira avec soy toute cette multitude.

“ Et quoy que les soldats François fussent faschez de la perte de ceux qui furent ainsi submergez, desquels ils eussent pû tirer bonne rançon, si est ce qu’ils se resjouissoient davantage du bien public.”

And so ended the most memorable day in the history of the old bridge.

The first stone of the new one was laid on the 8th of September, 1751, and it was com-

pleted in eight years, under the superintendence of M. Hupeau, a celebrated engineer, at a cost of 2,670,856 francs. Madame de Pompadour was the first who passed over it when complete, upon which occasion the good folk of Orleans circulated the following epigram.

Censeurs de notre pont, vous dont l'impertinence
 Va jusqu' à la témérité,
 Hupeau par un seul fait vous réduit au silence ;
 Bien solide est son pont ; ce jour il a porté
 Le plus lourd fardeau de la France.

The town shews itself to advantage from the other side of the river, and a pretty drawing might be made of it from the water side a little above the bridge. The scene indeed is not eminently picturesque, being destroyed by the faults of the river above spoken of ; yet the beauty of the evening, and the perpetual variations of lights and shadows in the little picture formed by the river and the town, which a splendid setting sun occasioned, tempted me to stroll so far along the bank, that, as I returned to my inn, not a sound was to be heard of all the various noises which had during the day proceeded from the numerous craft upon the river ; the stream, as it rippled along the sides of the moored barges, made a low and gentle music ; and when I turned the corner of the Rue Royale,

the moonlight was playing on the figure of Jeanne d'Arc in the Place du Martroy, and the whole town was as silent as if it contained not a living creature.

CHAPTER V.

Orleans—View from the top of the Cathedral—La Sologne — Condition of the Population of this District—Superstitions — Curious Custom—Cathedral—Interior—West Front — Destruction of the old Cathedral—Foundation of the Present Structure — The Jubilee at Orleans—Account of the Expences of Building the Cathedral—New Street—Beards and Bishops—" A Difference between a Bishop and a Dean"—Books in Orleans in the Sixteenth Century—Historical localities in Orleans—Anecdotes—Earl of Salisbury—Marie Touchet — Diana of Poitiers—Jeanne d'Are's house — Curious Passages concerning her—Present State of the House which she inhabited—Specimen of an Orleanais Ballad — Source of the River Loiret.

EARLY the next morning, according to the usage set forth and explained at the beginning of the last chapter, for the imitation of all tourists, ramblers, topographers, and travellers of all sorts, I betook myself to the abode of the principal sexton, sacristan, verger, or bell-ringer of the cathedral church of St Croix, and requested him to accompany me to the top of one of the towers. He lived in a little house a few yards only distant from the church, and we commenced our ascent

forthwith. The whole of the edifice is kept in the most perfect order, and the stair by which we ascended was in as good repair and swept as clean as the most thrifty housewife could desire.

The view from the top is a wide one, for Orleans stands in the centre of the largest plain in France. Some remnants of the ancient forest of Orleans might be descried to the eastward, and to the westward the eye could trace the course of the river for many a league, here loosing it as it wound under some vine-covered bank a little higher than the general elevation of the flat plain through which it meanders, and there again recognizing it by the sparkle and play of the morning sun upon some elbow of the stream when it swelled into a wider expanse of water.

About the mid distance in this direction, my friend, the sacristan, pointed out to me the junction of the little river Loiret, from which the department takes its name, with the Loire; and, still farther away to the south-west, the tower of Notre Dame de Clery, the finest church in the diocese, he assured me, "excepté toujours le nôtre."

Due south of Orleans the eye wanders over a wide expanse of flat objectless country, which, unlike the northern part of the depart-

ment and the banks of the river, is poor, unproductive, and thinly populated. This ungenial district, which extends a considerable distance to the south-west into the department of Loire-et-Cher, is called La Sologne. It is a sandy, ill-cultivated, poverty-stricken country, and the population are in their habits and customs very different from the inhabitants of the more favoured districts which surround it.

A little excursion which I made into La Sologne from Orleans soon sufficed to shew me that a journey of a few miles had brought me among a people fifty or a hundred years backwarder in progress of every sort than their near neighbours of the northern bank of the Loire. It is impossible to conceive a country more totally devoid of every charm, or more tediously monotonous to traverse. Yet it is well worth a short visit, for the sake of appreciating the influences of soil and position on the fortunes of a people.

Poverty and the laborious life, which the difficulty of wringing a niggard subsistence from the ungrateful soil necessitates, tend to isolate the inmates of each farmhouse, as well as to prevent much communication with the more fortunately-circumstanced population of

the neighbouring districts. This isolation, too, is further increased by the great want of roads and means of communication, under which the Sologne labours.

The result is, that a variety of those whimsical customs, which every district is sure to preserve as long as its population remains unmingled with that of others, and which as surely fly before the advance of highroads, stage-coaches, and steamboats, are still to be found in the Sologne. Many of those strange superstitions which the human mind, in the lack of culture, engenders as surely and as abundantly as a neglected field brings forth weeds, still remain firm part and parcel of the creed of the Solonais peasant, though long since ridiculed and now forgotten by all the world ten miles off.

At a Solonais wedding the bride and bridegroom invariably appear each with a wax taper in their hand, with the view of ascertaining which is to be the survivor, as they doubt not that the one whose candle shall first burn out shall depart first from life.

Their devotion to the church does not prevent their indulging in a sly piece of rustic satire at the expense of the priest. The first Sunday in Lent a procession of peasants, car-

rying lighted torches, makes the circuit of the cornfields, singing as they march—

“ Sortez, sortez, d’ici, mulots !
 Ou je vais vous bruler vos crocs
 Quittez, quittez, ces blés ;
 Allez ! vous trouverez
 Dans la cave du curé
 Plus à boire qu’ à manger.

With the absurdities, however, are preserved the virtues of a primitive condition of society. Kindness, hospitality, and mutual assistance, are universal among them. When a young couple marry without the means of commencing housekeeping, as is ordinarily the case, the contributions of the neighbourhood are always forthcoming to supply the deficiency. The mode of collecting these is whimsical enough. Five young peasant girls, dressed of course in their best “ costume de fête,” proceed to make the “ quête” among the assembled company, which consists for the most part of nearly the entire population of the parish. They conduct their operations in the following manner. The first holds a distaff and spindle in her hands, which she presents to each of the company while she sings

“ L’ épousée a bien quenouille et fuseau ;
 Mais de chanvre, hélas ! pas un écheveau !
 Pourra-t-elle donc filer son trousseau ?”

The second damsel receives the offerings

produced by this appeal in the husband's drinking-cup.

The third acts the part of Hebe, and pours out a draught of wine, which she offers to each contributor to the store.

The fourth carries a napkin, with which she wipes the mouth of the guest after his draught, and thus prepares the way for the performance of the duty entrusted to the fifth, always the prettiest of the party, that of rewarding him for his generosity with a kiss.

A miserable thin wine is produced on the light sandy soil of the Sologne, good for nothing but to be turned into vinegar, but deemed a luxury by the poor people, who know how much labour it has cost to obtain it.

I fear that I have been making rather an unconscionably long digression respecting these Solonais and their peculiarities, considering that I left myself on the top of the tower of the cathedral *Revenons a nos moutons.*

After taking a general survey of the environs, and acquiring a tolerably correct notion of the ichnography of the town, together with the nomenclature of all the different churches and public buildings, I signified to my patient

cicerone my readiness to descend and view the interior of the church.

Orleans cathedral presents the unusual spectacle of a gothic church built principally in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Great credit is due to the series of architects who were successively entrusted with the work, for having closely adhered to the original plan of the projector. How entirely would the whole effect of the building have been destroyed, if, instead of the two splendid towers at the west end, two hideous masses of the renaissance architecture had usurped their place!

The interior of the church is very fine, though for its breadth it wants height. The loss of the painted windows, too, destroyed in those troubles which also much injured the fabric of the church, is severely felt. The newness of the building, and sharpness of all its outlines and angles, joined to the poverty of the common glass windows, and the strong light admitted by them, give a look of rawness and a want of all those picturesquely venerable effects which the mellow tints and softening touch of age alone can impart.

The west front is unquestionably the finest thing about Orleans cathedral. The ornamented portals, the symmetrical beauty of

the two noble towers, with their octagonal tops, and the light grace of the delicately-worked, diadem-like circlets which complete them, together with the exquisite lace-like tracery of the superb rose windows, form a very magnificent and striking whole.

With few exceptions, the fine churches of Europe have all been the work of ages so long past, that no detailed or accurate account of the expence of their construction can be obtained. A few particulars, therefore, of this nature, respecting this cathedral, may be interesting to those who have no means of estimating the amount of labour and expence which similar piles have cost.

But the reader shall first of all hear under what circumstances the work was undertaken. In 1567 the cathedral was little more than a mass of ruins. When the protestants obtained possession of Orleans in 1562, the body of the church was preserved from total ruin only because it served as a stable to the German Reitres, their allies. Five years afterwards the fanatics completed its ruin.

It is admitted by the Catholic writers that the Prince de Condé did all in his power to save the edifice from the blind fury of his party. He walled up all the doors, and even went so far as to order a man to be fired on

who had climbed up to the roof, and was testifying his zeal for the purity of religion by cutting away great bits of the gilded lead with which it was covered. His care, however, was all in vain; for in the night of the 24th of March, 1567, a band of enthusiasts, excited to the act by Theodore Beza, as tradition—with what degree of truth, I know not—declares, got into the church by the windows, and worked a mine under the pillars which supported the bell-tower. They thus succeeded in levelling with the ground nearly the whole building.

Charles IX. did somewhat towards repairing it in 1580; but the beginning of the present edifice must be dated from the 18th of April, 1601, on which day Henry IV. and his queen laid the first stone.

The day was a memorable one in the annals of Orleans; and the scene which the city then presented must have been one that would not easily be forgotten by any of those who witnessed it; some among whom have not neglected to transmit the record of it to posterity.

It was a time of rejoicing and of hope throughout France. The civil war which had so long ravaged the kingdom from end to end was at length appeased, and men began

to sow the land with a well-assured hope of reaping the reward of their toil, and to labour in the creative arts of peace instead of turning all their energies to the business of destruction.

Henry, anxious to bury in oblivion all reminiscences which might tend to lessen the cordiality of his reconciliation with his Catholic subjects, had already, on the occasion of his passing through the town in 1598, taken upon himself the task of restoring the cathedral, and had assigned for this purpose the proceeds of a tax on salt, to be levied throughout the districts of Tours, Moulins, Orleans, and Bourges. He also obtained from Clement VIII. that the promise he had made to that pope to found a convent for men, and one for women, in every province both of France and Bearn, as a price of his absolution from the stain of heresy, should be exchanged for his undertaking to rebuild the cathedral of St. Croix at Orleans.

To assist the same object, the holy father was also induced to proclaim a jubilee, with the usual indulgencies for all those who should visit — of course not empty-handed — this church, in lieu of going to Rome. This jubilee was granted for three months, which were afterwards extended to five; and it was

during this time that Henry with his queen, Mary de Medicis, came to Orleans to partake of the blessings promised to the pilgrims, and at the same time to lay the first stone of the new fabric.

Never had Orleans seen such days as those which followed the proclamation of this memorable jubilee; and it may be very safely asserted that such she will never see again. Day after day fresh pilgrims of all classes arrived not only from all the provinces of France, but from every part of Europe. Every house in Orleans became a caravanserai for the reception of strangers, and was crowded with as many as could find shelter beneath its roof.

Still the accommodation provided fell short of the wants of the increasing multitude. Day after day fresh bands poured in. A new town of tents arose around the walls and in the open spaces of the city. Every European language mingled in the united roar of human voices which rose from the mighty multitude; and men might have thought that old times were come again, and that it was the gathering for a fresh crusade.

A tablet, bearing a long inscription, with the heading, "POSTERITATI SACRUM," records that the holy sacrament was then administered to five hundred thousand persons.

“Anno per Jesum Christum reparatæ salutis, MDC.,” thus runs this curious document; “die xviii. Novembr. sepoltis bellorum civilium cineribus, partibus sublatis, parta firmataque toto regno pace, ubi fessæ res in Henricum IV. gloriosissimum regem cessere, et lamentabile regnum tot quassatum impetibus tantisper elatâ cervice reffloruit, Clemens VIII., summus pontifex, Pater orbis, et Francorum amor, ad promerendam Dei gratiam, succidendas hæreses, et ecclesiæ stabilienda columnina, in hac Aureliorum civitate, Jubilæum ad tres menses indixit, ad quod ex orbe Franco reliquisque terrarum partibus tot populorum globi confluxere, ut innumeros hospites urbe non capiente, sacratissimum Eucharistiæ epulum, quod vix credatur, quingenties mille hominibus magnâ omnium admiratione fuerit impertitum.”

The inscription goes on to declare that the king came to the jubilee, and laid the first stone of the pillar, on which the recording tablet is now fixed. It is to the right of the entrance of the choir.

The king's offering upon the occasion, in addition to the tax before mentioned, was thirty thousand francs, payable in the course of ten years—a proviso which sounds strange when considered with reference to the sum to

be paid. £1200—and forty acres of the finest wood in his forest of Orleans. In 1612, twelve years from the period of this grant, we find that the produce of these forty acres was all used up; and Louis XIII. then granted a hundred more from the same forest.

The works were continued under several architects up to 1708, at a cost of 13,661,586 francs. From 1708 to 1710, 50,000 francs were expended; and from the latter period to 1738, 25,000 francs. In 1739, the whole structure was raised twelve feet, six inches, at a cost of 83,952 francs. A further elevation of sixteen feet, nine inches, in 1746, cost 140,000. In 1752, and the following years, seventeen feet, nine inches, were added to the pile, at an expense of 260,000 francs; from 1768 to 1773, the progress of the works cost 2,400,000 francs; in 1774, 365,000 francs; in 1775, 420,000; in 1776, 500,000; in 1777, 200,000; in 1778, 600,000; in 1779, 140,000; in 1780, 250,000; in 1781, 415,000; in 1782, 236,000; in 1783, 120,000; in 1784, 200,000; in 1785, 300,000; in 1786, 400,000; in 1787, 136,000; in 1788, 280,000; in 1789, 120,000; and in 1790, 150,000 francs were expended. Various sums disbursed for repairs, alterations, and completion of the work from 1816 to 1829, amount to 400,000.

The whole of these sums, together with some small charges for models in wood, &c., will give a total of twenty-two millions of francs, as the entire cost of the building; a sum very far inferior, it must be remembered, to that which it would require to produce the same result at the present day in France, and still more below what a similar pile would cost in this country.

The citizens of Orleans are still engaged in beautifying and improving their town. The cathedral, when at length complete, was so masked by the closely-surrounding houses that it was almost impossible to see it. This misfortune is now in the course of being remedied. A large street has been opened exactly opposite the west front of the church, communicating with the principal thoroughfare in the town, the Rue Royale, which runs from the Place du Martroy to the bridge. This will be a very important improvement, and will, at the same time that it embellishes the town and opens a communication much wanted, afford as fine a view of the magnificent west front of the cathedral as can be desired.

Somebody or other says somewhere that a very interesting and amusing book might be written on the various fashions which have regulated in different ages and countries the

management of the hair and beard. It would not be a volume conversant only with the toilet and the curling-tongs, and redolent only of precious eastern ointments, or their celebrated modern rival, Macassar oil. On the contrary, the competent author of such a work must have turned many a huge folio of musty jurisprudence, and have fought through many a tome of fiercest polemical discussion.

From the ante-Mosaic regulations of Chinese legislators to the bitter warfare against "love-locks," waged by Puritan Prynne, and from the anathemas of grave councils, and reverend bishops, to the late ordinance of the citizen king, commanding all civilians in his employ to shave their upper lips, great has been the anxiety of mankind respecting the trimming of their fellow-creatures' beards and hair.

The bishops and canons of Orleans were principally engaged during the sixteenth century in bitter warfare respecting these troublesome excrescences.

Jean de Longueville, a grave and strict prelate and rigorous observer of discipline, when he was appointed to the see in 1528, found to his horror all his chapter moustached, whiskered, and bearded, like so many citizens of La Jeune France. It was not till after a

long and hard contest, in which the contending parties all but came to blows, that the matter was settled.

It was not always that similar quarrels were brought to a termination in those days so happily. For we find it expressly forbidden to the canons by a regulation of the chapter, to “repondre a des arguments par des coups des poing.”

Jean de Longueville, however, was victorious; and each member of the chapter was compelled to remove every trace of hair from his face, and was ordered, moreover, not to show himself in the choir except with shoes “square, and of a decent shape.”

Now it so happened that when all the canons were shaved clean, and peace was once more established in the church, Jean de Longueville died, and Jean de Morvilliers was appointed to the bishoprick in his stead. Now Jean de Morvilliers was another guess sort of priest from his predecessor, and he arrived one fine morning at Orleans with a magnificent long black beard, and a splendid moustache and whiskers to match.

This really was rather too bad. It was more than mortal—even though ecclesiastical—flesh and blood could bear. However, it was now their turn. They were scandalized

and shocked. They had never heard of such a thing. They pointed to the regulations, referred to the councils, and quoted the canons; and finally they shrugged their shoulders, rubbed their smooth chins, and declared unanimously that it was quite out of the question having a bishop with such a beard as that, and that they would not admit him into the church.

So Jean de Morvilliers was forced to go back to his patron, King Henry II., and tell him that the canons of Orleans had "laughed at his beard," and refused to admit him to the see. Whereupon the king despatched the following epistle to the chapter, wherein his majesty seems to incline quite as much to the deprecatory as to the objurgatory and imperative moods.

"Notre ami et féal Jean de Morvilliers, évêque d'Orléans, délibérant de faire son entrée, et d'autant que portant barbe vous pourriez différer sa réception, sous ombre des coutumes et usances observées en semblable cas, nous avons bien voulu vous avertir comme l'ayant employé en plusieurs affaires, tant en notre royaume, que hors d'icelui, comme nous avons encore délibéré de faire pour ses vertus, expérience et dextérité que nous lui connaissons au maniement des affaires, il est contraint

pour le bien de notre service de s'accommoder à la façon de ceux auprès de quels il a à résider et négotier ; et encore le reconnaissant personne si vertueuse, desirant singulièrement l'observation des saints décrets, entretenement de bonnes et louables coutumes, et de toutes choses qui appartiennent à l'honneur de Dieu, et de nôtre mère Sainte Eglise ; nous pensons bien que vous ne voudrez pas, pour si peu de chose, empêcher la dite réception ; néan moins nous vous prions et commandons que, sans vous arrêter à ce qu'il porte barbe, comme dit est, vous ayez à le recevoir en votre Eglise, sans qu'il soit tenu d'abattre la dite barbe."

His majesty's letter was received and read in full chapter, where it gave rise to much indignation among the good canons, but altogether failed of producing any other result.

"Pour si peu de chose!" cried they. "To think of calling such a beard as that 'peu de chose!' And such whiskers! and *such* a moustache! Oh! it can't be! The church of St. Croix of Orleans would be disgraced in the eyes of all Christendom!"

So the chapter broke up in the firm determination of resisting such a scandal to the uttermost. And as Jean de Morvilliers was as firmly attached to his moustache and whiskers, and made a point of his beard, it

came to pass that the see of Orleans remained vacant for the next three years.

If these worthy fathers should seem to have herein preferred the greater to the lesser evil, or to have shown themselves in any degree unenlightened or illiberal, another curious fact, which the archives of the cathedral of about the same period furnish, may in some measure excuse, or at least account for their want of cultivation. Books, it seems, were at that time so scarce in Orleans, owing partly no doubt to the sufferings of the town during the wars, that even the few copies of the church service, which constituted the library of the cathedral, were let out to the prebendaries. The use of a common breviary for a man's life cost seven crowns.

After leaving the cathedral, where I fear the reader may think I have detained him too long, I spent the remainder of the day in rambling through the streets of the town, and poking into the multitude of nooks and corners it possesses, which are rendered interesting from having been connected with names of historic celebrity, or from being the subject of traditions illustrative of past times and manners.

Orleans is particularly rich in such spots. Indeed, it is chiefly on account of its old his-

torical renown and traditional reminiscences, that it is still an interesting city to the tourist. For with the exception of the cathedral, and the general view of the town from the river, it possesses little or nothing to gratify the eye. But the spot may still be seen where in 1429 the Earl of Salisbury fell mortally wounded by a stone thrown from a sling from the top of St. Mary's tower. The house where the beautiful Marie Touchet, Charles IX.'s mistress, was born, and in this gloomy residence of the old provincial magistrate her father, grew into that surpassing loveliness which led her to the equivocal splendour of a court, is yet pointed out in the Rue de la Vieille Poteriè.

Then we have an anecdote of another beauty of a very different stamp. In a little street called La Rue des Albanais, which opens into the Rue Neuve, is a house on which an immemorial tradition has affixed the title of "Maison de Diane de Poitiers." This celebrated mistress of Henry II. is known to have inhabited, when at Orleans, a house of more pretension in the Rue Neuve. But the tradition respecting the obscure dwelling in the Rue des Albanais relates that it was here that she was brought, after a fall from her horse, which broke her leg. Henry II., and his

queen, with a brilliant train, and the beautiful Diana among them, had been to the cathedral to hear the bishop preach, on the 4th of August, 1551. "Or advint que revenant de Sainte Croix, ou l'evêque Duchastel avait harangué la Cour, elle (Diana) se pensa rompre le col, et en fust quitte pour la jambe droiete, son cheval ayant failli des piéds de devant en passant devant Sainct Pierre-em-pont." "On la porta de suite dans son logis *de la rue neuve* où elle guarit assez longuement," says the historian. But she was probably taken in the first instance to the house indicated by the popular tradition, and removed to her own lodgings afterwards. We are told that she fell from her horse "malgré son adresse à le bien conduire."

"Il aurait semblé," adds the gallant Brantôme, "que telle rupture et les maux qu'elle endura, auraient dû changer sa belle face; point du tout; je la vis si belle encore que je sache cœur de roche qui ne s'en fust esmu."

Lastly, though twenty other localities might be enumerated, each with its legend, if time and space permitted, there is the "maison de Jeanne d'Arc." This house is now No. 35 in the Rue du Tabourg. It is a very ancient building, and in Jeanne's time was close to the wall of the town, by the "Porte Renard."

It then belonged to Jacques Bouchier, treasurer to the Duke of Orleans; and it was here that the heroine resided on her arrival in Orleans, previous to its delivery from the English, 1429.

The following passage from an old chronicler is somewhat long, but it is so extremely graphic and interesting, that I cannot curtail it.

“Après que la pucelle fust entrée à Orleans le Vendredy 29^e jour d’Avril de l’année 1429 par la porte Bourgongne, accompagnée des bourgeois et gens d’armes qui estoient allés a sa rencontre jusqu’ à Chécy, les bourgeois et les bourgeoises se portoient sur son passage en grand tumulte, et la regardoient si affectueusement que tous avoient les yeux fichés sur elle, tant hommes, que femmes et petits enfans. Avec cette admiration et affection ils l’accompagnèrent tout le long de la grand’ ruë qui traverse la ville, et la conduisirent depuis la porte Bourgongne jusqu’ auprès de la porte Renard en l’hostel de Jacques Bouchier, pour lors thrésorier du duc d’Orleans, ou elle feust honorablement recuë et logée avec ses deux frères et les deux gentilhommes, et leur valet, qui estoient venus avec elle du païs de Barrois. On lui avoit faict appareiller à souper bien et honorablement; mais elle fist

seulement mettre du vin dans une tasse d'argent, où elle mist moitié d'eau, et cinq ou six soupes dedans, qu'elle mangea, et ne prist austre chouse tout ce jour, pour manger ni boire, quoiqu'elle eust esté tout le jour à cheval; puis s'alla coucher en la chambre qui lui avoit esté ordonnée; et avec elle estoient la femme et la fille du dict Thrésorier, la quelle fille coucha avec la dicte Jeanne. Le premier de May elle chevaucha par la ville, accompagnée de plusieurs chevaliers et escuyers, pour ce que ceulx d'Orléans avoient si grant volonté de la veoir, qu'ils rompoient presque l'huy de l'hostel ou elle estoit logée."

On a subsequent occasion, we have the following very curious account of a scene which took place in the chamber above mentioned, on the eve of the day on which she routed the English on the bridge, as has been related above. It is her squire, Daulon, who is speaking, at his examination respecting her.

" Il qui parle se mist sur une couchette en la chambre de la dicte Pucelle pour un pou soy reposer; et aussi se mist icelle avecque sa dicte hostesse sur un autre liet pour pareillement soy dormir et reposer; mais ainsi que lediet déposant commençoit à prendre son repos, soudainement icelle Pucelle se leva du diet liet en faisant grant bruit, l'esveilla; et

lors lui demanda, il qui parle, qu'elle vouloit ; laquelle lui respondit en nom de Dieu ; mon conseil m'a dict que je voise contre les Anglois ; mais je ne sçay si je dois aller à leurs bastilles, ou contre F'ascolf qui les doiet avitailler. Sur quoi se leva le dict déposant incontinent, et le plus tost qu'il peust, arma la dicte Pucelle," &c.

A stranger is shown in the house above mentioned two small vaulted rooms, one above the other, which the people who now live in the house assure him were Jeanne's cabinet and sleeping-chamber. The walls of them are immensely thick, and the vaulted roofs are ornamented with quaint sculptures in relief. But the real fact is, that the façade facing the street is the only remaining portion of the building which existed in La Pucelle's time. A M. Colas sieur Desfrancs, who had become possessor of the house towards the end of the sixteenth century, rebuilt it almost entirely, and built these two rooms *on the site of Jeanne's chamber*, as a memorial of her residence there. For these facts, as well as for several others in the above pages, I am indebted to a very satisfactory history of Orleans, by E. F. Vergnaud-Romagnesi.

I had not concluded my perambulations till it was quite dark ; and as returning to my

inn I stumbled along a winding lane between two dead walls, as black as Erebus, I could not help thinking that the pœans of triumph contained in an old song, still remembered in Orleans, which was made on the introduction of lamps into the city, in 1776, were somewhat premature. Take two stanzas of it for a specimen.

Vous qui venez de compagnie
 Et de mener joyeuse vie,
 Êtes vous gris ?
 Vous ne pouvez tomber par terre
 Car vous avez le reverbère
 Comme à Paris !

Jeunes amans qui savez plaire
 Ne parlez sous le reverbère
 Qu' à vos amis.
 Si votre amante a cette audace,
 On verra tout ce qui se passe
 Comme à Paris.

The next day was spent in a little excursion into the Sologne, the fruits of which the reader is already in possession of. On my return I visited " Le Chateau de la Source," which is deemed a great lion throughout the country. " La Source," which gives its name to this country-house, is in fact the source of the Loiret. This river runs but three leagues, and then falls into the Loire. But the curiosity of the thing is, that it rises in the midst of a level surface in sufficient quantity to

carry a boat from its very source. It is on record here that Lord Bolingbroke some time in the last century visited the chateau, and threw a silver cup into the pool, in the midst of which the spring bubbles up with considerable force, at the same time causing an expert diver from Nantes to plunge for it. The man very soon rose to the surface, and refused to try a second time, for fear of being drawn into the vast caverns, which he said he had perceived below.

The peasants of the neighbouring villages have all sorts of strange tales of enormous fishes and unknown monsters having been at divers times seen in the bubbling pool, and nothing could induce one of them to venture into it.

There are several circumstances about this river, which would make it worth a naturalist's while to visit it, if he found himself in the neighbourhood; but any Englishman not accustomed to fall into raptures at the sight of the grounds of a moderate country gentleman's house will be disappointed if he is induced to visit La Source on the score of the picturesque merits so lavishly attributed to it by the good folks of Orleans. But it must be confessed that the generality of the scenery in the Orleanais is sufficiently devoid of na-

tural beauty to excuse the inhabitants going a little into ecstacies respecting the only little bit of tolerably pretty ground in the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER VI.

Steamboats on the Loire—Various Companies for the Navigation of the River—The Quay at Orleans—Departure of the Boat—Construction of the Steamers on the Loire—Voyage to Meung—Junction of the Loiret with the Loire—Appearance of the River—Cellars at St. Pierre—Bridge of Meung—The Town—Walk to Clery—Story of Notre Dame de Clery—Tomb of Louis XI.—Strange Toll—Church at Clery—Figure of Louis XI.—Walk to Beaugency—View of the Town—Anecdotes of its History—Journey to Blois.

ON the following morning I left Orleans by the steamboat which descends the river. These boats have only recently been established, for though the great utility of such a means of communication, carrying thus the powers of steam, the great agent of modern progress, into the very heart and centre of the land, is sufficiently obvious, there were great difficulties and obstacles to be overcome. The Loire is now navigated by steamboats the whole way from Nevers to St. Nazaire, a distance of about five hundred miles. This navigation is divided into three portions, which are, I believe, worked by three different companies.

The first of these plies between Nevers and Orleans, a distance of about a hundred and sixty miles. This is performed in one day for the descent, and two for the return. The second carries you from Orleans to Nantes, about two hundred and forty miles. This distance is accomplished in two days descending, and three in ascending the stream. Finally, the boats of the bas Loire descend and return from Paimbœuf twice daily, and prolong their voyage to St. Nazaire, a mere little fishing-town, twice or thrice a week.

This lower part of the river has of course been navigated by steam for a much longer period ; and indeed I believe that from Nantes up as far as Angers boats have been for some time established. But the navigation of the upper part of the river is difficult, from the great want of water to which the stream is occasionally subject during the dry season. At length, however, chiefly by the persevering energy of M. Henri Larochejaquelin, a nephew, I believe, of him who has connected the name of Larochejaquelin for ever with associations and recollections of so different a character, this difficulty has been in a great measure overcome by the adoption of light iron boats, which draw from nine to thirteen inches only of water. They are low pressure



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Illustration of a busy outdoor market scene.

boats, and have assumed the auspicious appellation of “ les Inexplosibles.”

On board one of these Inexplosibles then I hastened, at eight o'clock, on the morning after my return from visiting the Solonais. The warning note of the bell hastened my steps, as I descended the Rue Royal towards the bridge; and as I emerged from the street on the neat pretty little quay, which runs on either side of the bridge the whole length of the town, the intense state of bustle and agitation in which the crowd appeared to be indicated the near approach of the moment of departure.

I elbowed my way on board through the crowd, saw my baggage safely deposited on the deck, and was then at leisure to amuse myself with the scene on the quay and on board. An Englishman, who had never before seen Frenchmen, and their mode of doing things, would have deemed that the boat was on the point of giving the lie to its name, and blowing us all into the air, or at least that every soul on board was some very near and dear relation of every soul on the quay, and that we were all bound for New South Wales. The captain, standing on the paddle-box, had, from his air and gesticulation, every appearance of being in the agonies of phrenzied de-

spair, caused, as I presently perceived, by the tardy movements of a little boy, who was lugging down the quay a huge basket of hot rolls for our breakfast. Clang, clang, jang, jang, went the bell unintermittingly; the steam hissed, phizzed, and roared by turns; and the crowd, both on the quay and on board, evidently labouring under the influence of the most exciting emotions, were chattering, hallooing, swearing, and gesticulating with an intensity of purpose quite astounding.

At last, after vehement contest between the captain and a peasant who insisted on bringing a great hog on board with him, in which dispute most of the bystanders took part, the rope which held us to the bank was thrown off, and away we phizzed down the river.

I had now leisure to bestow some attention on the construction and arrangements of our little "Inexplosible." A long, slight iron shell, so narrow as to give it an air of great fragility, is divided into five compartments, as follows. First; immediately before the helm is a little deck, flush with the top of the sides of the boat, elevated about a foot above the surface of the river, and enclosed by a slight balustrade. This is the exclusive domain of the first cabin passengers.

Next to this comes their cabin. This is a slight construction, occupying the whole breadth of the boat, and roofed with canvas only, so that it is impossible to get upon the top of it. The boat is here of course something deeper, perhaps about two feet. The cabin, therefore, is raised above the sides of it about four feet and a half. A little door, with a descent of three steps, admits you from the after-deck to the cabin. This is fitted up comfortably enough, with cushioned benches all around, and a sufficiency of tables and camp-stools. On either side is a range of little windows, which, in cold or wet weather, must be a source of considerable annoyance, as of course "la grande nation" cannot accomplish the feat of making them shut.

A similar little door to that at the aft-end of the cabin opens, at the opposite end, upon a little passage, which divides it from the engine-room. This also rises above the sides of the boat necessarily, but not so much so as the cabin. It is covered with sheet-iron, but not of sufficient solidity to afford any accommodation, except to light parcels, on the roof. Two narrow passages along the sides of the paddle-boxes keep up the communication of one end of the vessel with the other.

On the other side of the engine-room the

fore-cabin is entered by a similar door to that of the other cabin. The construction of this is the same as that of the after-cabin. The fitting-up of course is of a different description, and the fares are about half.

At the fore-end of this, another door opens on a second little deck, occupying a similar position in the fore-end of the boat to that of the after-deck behind. To this remote spot must all smokers have recourse, for such fragrant abominations are rigorously excluded from the after-deck.

From this arrangement of the boat it will be observed that a very insufficient means of communication from one end to the other is afforded, seeing that the only passage is through both the cabins. To remedy this inconvenience, a little rail, projecting over the water horizontally from the side of the boat to the extent of about eight inches, and running along its entire length, affords a passage, which may seem somewhat precarious perhaps to dizzy eyes and giddy heads, but which an iron rail for the hand, running along the edge of the cabin-roofs, renders sufficiently secure and practicable.

By the time I had made these observations on the topography of an "Inexplosible," we were passing the spot where the Loiret arrives

at the end of its three league course, and throws its contributions into the Loire. The dark green waters which the tributary brings fresh from their subterranean caves at first refuse to mingle with the more turbid stream of the travel-stained Loire, and, like a newly-arrived knot of simple-minded rustics in a large town, are for a short while distinguishable by their superior purity from the surrounding mass, with which they must so soon be assimilated.

For some time after leaving Orleans the receding town and bridge are pleasing objects which retain the traveller's eye, till a turn in the river hides them from him. But, with this exception, the river is in this part of its course entirely devoid of all beauty. The bed, indeed, of the stream is wide, and in the wet season it must present a body of water of imposing extent ; but in summer the constantly recurring sand-banks, heaving their hideous naked backs above the water, and stretching out in long, low, yellow lines athwart the river, now in one direction, and now in another, divide the shallow water into so many currents, that all the unity and majesty of the stream is lost. Like a crabbed-tempered, but honest-hearted friend, the Loire is seen to disadvantage when the summer sun is

smiling around, and every thing looks bright and gay; and to be "viewed aright" should be visited in the gloomy season of rain and storm.

The banks, too, in this part of the river do not in any degree compensate by their beauty for the want of it in the stream. Low, monotonous, and covered for the most part, not with "the purple grape," but with the brown vine, which, however picturesque it may sound in poetry, or be in the time of the vintage, is in the early summer the most unsightly crop which grows, they are so totally devoid of any one element of interest, that in truth I was not sorry when my first short voyage on the far-famed Loire was drawing to a conclusion.

This was not long in arriving, for I intended to disembark at Meung, or Mehun, a little town on the northern bank of the river, which the boat reached about ten o'clock. Just before arriving there, we passed the village of St. Pierre on the right hand shore, where a long range of cellars, hollowed out of the white-faced, calcareous bank, and opening with low-browed, arched doorways on the river, have at a distance exactly the appearance of a huge fortification.

The bridge of Meung then was in sight, a

light, elegant structure, crossing the river at four long bounds, and sustained in its spring by four cables of wire on either side. And in a minute or two more a little punt, which had put out from shore for the purpose, was caught by a boat-hook, and towed along by our side till I and two fellow-passengers had descended into it ; so that our disembarkation was effected with the loss of only a few strokes of the engine, and of very little time to the boat.

Immediately below Meung the bank of the river rises into a moderate hill, which is well planted, and makes a pretty back-ground to the little town. The church, which is of Norman architecture, and has the appearance of considerable antiquity, is prettily situated among a tuft of trees immediately under it. And the old red brick chateau, once a place of strength, which has “ stood many shrewd blows ” in the English wars, is dozing away the remainder of its days in all the otium cum dignitate of ivy-laced walls and crumbling turret-roofs, close to its old friend and contemporary, the church. The group is a picturesque one, and would make a sketch worth drawing ; but we must not be seduced into putting the suspension-bridge, elegant as it is, into our picture, for it would destroy all the unities. And without it the contiguous

church and chateau, and the — crouching, some would say ; I say — nestling little town around them, “*sont toute une histoire*” (to use a French phrase), and tell it too very prettily.

My object in leaving the steamer here was to make a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Clery, which is situated on the left of the river, about a league to the south. The name of this obscure little village must be familiar to ten thousand English readers, for every one who has ever visited the spot. Who has not learned from the pages of Quentin Durward, if not from those of any graver and less fascinating history, the devotion “*toute particulière*” of the bigot Louis XI. for his Lady of Clery, and the reiterated oaths with which that rare compound of knavery and folly used to swear to the little leaden representative of her, which he was wont to carry in his hat, that every new crime of which he had been guilty, or which he intended to commit, should be his last !

I could not pass so celebrated a shrine without turning aside from my route to visit it ; and I trod the path as devout a pilgrim, I doubt not, as the generality of my bare-footed predecessors, though my pilgrimage was perhaps performed in honour of a different ob-

ject—of one whose presence in this spot is indicated only by the ubiquitous spell of his genius, but whose *relics* are at least as numerous, and happily as infinitely multipliable, as those of any saint in the calendar.

Much talk was heard in Europe, about the year one thousand three hundred, of the miracles performed at the shrine of our Lady, in the church of Clery-sur-Loire, which quickly gained so much repute, that Philippe de Melun, Marshal of France, was induced, in 1302, to found a chapter there. This attention was naturally gratifying to our Lady of Clery, and the miracles became more miraculous and more frequent than ever, insomuch that pilgrims were attracted thither from far and wide, and rich offerings flowed in in profusion. Thus our Lady of Clery and her servants, the chapter, grew richer and richer every day, till at length one morning, in the year 1428, a very disagreeable-looking body of pilgrims, with a certain gentleman, not altogether unknown even to those peaceful priests, at their head, rode up to the church.

That stout knight little thought that day under what circumstances his next visit in this neighbourhood would be made, or how soon he should find out what disagreeable companions amid the sufferings of a death-

chamber certain reminiscences might prove ! For the leader of that band of bold riders was no other than that Earl of Salisbury, who so shortly afterwards received his death-blow before the walls of Orleans, and was brought to die at the neighbouring town of Meung.

Well ! these suspicious pilgrims bent no knee, said no prayer, and brought no offering. *Au contraire*, they laid their hands on all the accumulated riches of the last century and a half, smashed all the furniture of the church to atoms, and rode off, leaving our Lady of Clery to begin the world afresh, as poor as she had been two hundred years ago, before her reputation had been established.

They could not, however, filch from her her good name. And this, notwithstanding her fallen fortunes, still stood so high, that the judicious piety of Louis XI. selected her among all her other rival "ladies" as his especial patroness, and rewarded her unrequited merit with a donation of 2330 golden crowns. He moreover paid her the especial compliment of directing himself to be buried in her church.

She has not, however, been able to perform the miracle — an arduous one, it must be admitted, it would have been in "la belle France" — to secure to the monarch a peaceful

resting-place. The monument which was erected to him over his grave, in the nave of the church, was overthrown and mutilated by the Huguenots in 1562. Restored and reinstated in its place by Louis XIII., it was again displaced and injured at the revolution.

It has, however, since that time, been once more replaced, and the injuries it had received repaired. And this completes the history of Notre Dame de Clery, and of the posthumous fortunes of her most devoted votary, *up to* the present time.

I commenced my walk from Meung to Clery by crossing the remarkably light suspension-bridge, having first duly paid two *liards* for the permission to do so. It is strange that a toll, demanded for a public work, and regulated by public authority, should be a sum named in terms abolished by the government, and impossible to be paid in the legal currency of the country, seeing that the old liard was a quarter of a sou, and two of them, therefore, equivalent to two centimes and a half of the present currency, a fraction which does not exist in the new coinage.

The road, if it can be called such, which leads to Clery, is a mass of deep loose sand, ploughed by the labouring wheels of the carts which traverse the fields for agricultural pur-

poses. The whole distance is perfectly flat, and if, for any conceivable reason, it might have been convenient to our Lady of Clery to know beforehand when she was going to receive visitors, and be called on to display her miraculous powers for their edification, nothing could be easier than to descry, from the top of the church, a pilgrim wending his toilsome way through the sand in any part of the extensive plain, a good half hour before he could arrive at the shrine.

The church at Clery is worth seeing. It is in the simplest gothic style. The exterior, indeed, is disfigured by clumsy heavy buttresses, and by a huge ugly tower, built on one side of the nave two centuries ago. But the inside is a specimen of the beauty which may be produced by fine proportions, and the intrinsic elegance and harmony of gothic forms, unaided by ornament, or any of that exuberant richness which the munificent piety of a subsequent and more luxurious age loved to lavish on their churches. It is in a very naked and unfurnished condition, which, displeasing as it must be to the eye of a Roman Catholic, is to those accustomed to a greater simplicity in places of worship only an additional assistance in appreciating the majestic proportions of the building. It has not indeed

been wanting in ornament in the days of its splendour, and several curious and well-executed fragments of sculpture, and a few painted windows remain, to testify to the former munificence of its patrons. But these have all been matters of detail, and have not entered into the general plan of the church.

The monument of Louis XI. is very handsome. It consists of a black altar tomb, on which the king is kneeling in the centre, with the figure of a kneeling angel at each corner: These five figures are of white marble, and are extremely well-executed. The figure of the king is particularly good, and the face, upturned in canting and most profitless devotion, has far more expression than is generally met with in monumental sculpture. With his little image hanging from his neck, his abject attitude, and his well known hat lying before his knees, he seems the very man every reader has pictured to himself. And the mean retreating forehead, the shrewd yet unintellectual eye, and the hypocritically pious expression of the mouth, all speak, as plainly as features ever spoke, that contemptible yet remarkable combination of odious qualities, which one of the finest portraits ever painted by the pen of novelist or historian has made familiar to all the world.

From Clery I walked by a road which keeps the southern side of the river to Beaugency, a town situated on the right bank. I had therefore to recross the river before arriving there, which I did by the bridge of Beaugency, a most heterogeneous assemblage of twenty-eight arches of all sizes, materials, forms, and dates. The country through which I passed, between Clery and Beaugency, had a well-cultivated, thriving air, but, with the exception of a peep of the river occasionally, it presented nothing of peculiar interest.

Beaugency, as seen from the opposite side of the river, makes a sufficiently striking and imposing appearance. An enormous square donjon, now roofless, but still rearing its rugged walls to the height of a hundred and fifteen feet, the sole remains of a once important castle, is the principal object in the view. This fine old keep encloses an area of seventy-two feet by sixty-two, and its walls at the base are about fourteen feet thick. No record remains of its foundation, and all that is known about it is that it existed in the eleventh century. Standing as it does alone, with its huge naked walls unsupported by any other building, and without a scrap of kindly ivy decently to veil the time-stained raggedness of its old age, it looks like some stern

grisly veteran, broken but still unsubdued by Time, a tough survivor of all his contemporaries, who, though past bearing arms, still loves to "shoulder his crutch," and keep up a martial bearing, and, still strong in constitution, promises yet to survive many a strippling of a younger generation.

Near this old giant is a well-proportioned tower, belonging to the church, though isolated from the rest of the fabric, which, with two or three high pointed roofs, and other quaint morsels of medieval architecture, make up a not unpicturesque group of buildings.

Few towns of similar fourth-rate size and importance can claim so prominent a place as Beaugency, in that terribly long chapter of history, which records all the mutual bloodshed and destruction that is held to constitute each nation's heir-loom of glory. Its ancient bridge over the Loire made it an important point, and drew upon it many a severe lesson on the danger of a possession coveted by the great. The Huns burnt it in 451. But creative industry had again made it worth taking in 480, so the Saxons took it. In 854 the Normans devastated it; and in 1367 the English did the same. In 1411 and 1428 they repeated their visits. And in the *religious* wars of the sixteenth century it was converted

backwards and forwards by the two contending parties with so much charitable zeal and fervour, and unfortunately with such alternate success, that it has never recovered from the force of the arguments then used by both sides to convince it.

In fact, to the present day, it bears, legibly imprinted on its physiognomy, the character of a town “ which has had misfortunes ;” and sundry ornamented façades, gothic stone doorways, corniced windows, conical-roofed staircase turrets, and fragments of town walls, are unmistakeable evidences of its having seen better days.

I intended to have left it the same night for Blois, but failed in getting a place in the diligence, and was fain, therefore, to content myself with such accommodations as the town in its reduced circumstances could afford me.

The next morning, at six o’clock, I started for Blois in a spruce little vehicle, which the people called a “ patache,” but which, as I afterwards discovered, bore not the smallest affinity to the very primitive conveyance rejoicing in that appellation. The genuine “ patache” is now, I believe, not to be met with out of the central districts of France ; but I suppose the carriage which carried me to Blois still continues to be called “ la pa-

tache'' by those who remember the time when the service was performed by one.

A four hours' drive through an open country, for the most part covered with vines, and, though no longer flat, yet by no means remarkable for its beauty, brought me to Blois by ten o'clock.

CHAPTER VII.

Blois—Its Position—Its Streets—The Chateau—Its exterior—Its Foundation, and Subsequent History—Murder of the Duc de Guise—Architecture of the Chateau—The most Ancient Part—Louis the Twelfth's Building—Lodging of the Ladies of Catherine de Medicis—Part Built by Francis I.—Hall of Assembly of the States—West Side built by Mansard—The Observatory of Catherine de Medicis—View from it—Porter of the Chateau.

BLOIS is a pleasant town. Not that it is either well built, or the streets well arranged—quite the contrary. But its picturesque position, its warm, southern aspect, and fine promenades, render it decidedly a pleasant place. I had rather dwell there, if I were compelled to make choice of either residence, than at the far more pretentious Tours, the town of predilection to the English.

Built on the side of a steep hill, which bends into the form of an amphitheatre towards the river, its gothic cathedral on the most elevated point of its eastern extremity, its chateau of a thousand souvenirs on that to the west, its grey roofs rising one above the other

in picturesque confusion, and mingling themselves with planted terraces and sunny spots of garden, its heavy, solid-looking bridge below, symmetrically placed opposite the middle of the town, its broad river, here free from visible sands, and the fine trees, which form a shady promenade along the quay on its bank, Blois does not disappoint the interest which its historic name excites in its behalf.

The principal, or at least the busiest street in Blois, is that which runs along the bank of the river the whole length of the town. This has houses only on one side, which look out pleasantly on the quays, the river, and, above the bridge, on the trees of the promenade. All the traffic which passes through the town is confined almost entirely to this street, for it is on the line of the great and important road which runs along the left bank of the Loire the whole distance from Orleans to Nantes. Here also are the two principal inns; and chance having led me to the Hôtel de l'Europe, an old-fashioned house with a spiral stone stair, and various other marks of the olden time, I took up my quarters there in a pleasant room looking over the promenade, for the few days I purposed remaining at Blois.

After breakfasting there, my earliest excursion was to the chateau. Turning up the first street which led into the interior of the town, I soon found that the position which gives it so picturesque an appearance from the river is not exactly the one best calculated to ensure the comfort and convenience of its inhabitants, and that the picturesque irregularity of its buildings was scarcely likely to compensate to permanent residents for the inconvenience and inaccessibility of many of the streets. As soon as I had plunged fairly into the middle of the old town, I found myself involved amidst a labyrinth of steep lanes and steeper stairs. The upper parts of the city would be utterly inaccessible, except by a considerable circuit, were it not for these multitudes of stairs. There were the "Degrées de St. Nicolas," and the "Degrées de St. Louis," and the "Rampe du Chateau," &c.

This last appellation indicated my route; and, after perseveringly mounting two or three long sets of stairs, I at length emerged from the closely-packed mass of building, through the heart of which I had been ascending, and found myself on a considerable open space in front of the chateau.

It does not make an imposing appearance on this, the eastern, side, and I would advise

a visitor to pass under an archway he will perceive in the north-eastern corner of the building, which will lead him down a steep declivity to an open space on the northern side of the castle, from which the best near view of it that is to be obtained will be found.

The chateaux of few country towns can boast so many and so important events, so long a list of illustrious inmates, or so large a collection of historical recollections, as that of Blois. Founded in the ninth century, we find it, in its earliest records, offering an asylum and protection to the neighbouring population and monks at the period of the Norman invasion. It remained the possession and residence of the Counts of Blois till the year 1391, when Guy de Châtillon, twentieth count, sold it, together with his county, to Louis of Orleans.

United to the crown by Louis XII., it was for many ages an object of affection and solicitude to his successors, and was successively added to and embellished by Louis XI., Louis XII., Francis I., Louis XIII., and Louis XIV.

The Blaisois boast that upwards of a hundred kings, princes, and princesses, have at different periods inhabited it; and various are the memories, grave and gay, which they have left behind them. We have records of

royal nuptials, and high festivals, jousts, and tournaments, brilliant fêtes, and pompous pageants, celebrated with all the elaborate splendour and quaint conceits of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and recorded with that circumstantial minuteness and laborious diffuseness which the "painful" chroniclers of those times were wont impartially to bestow on the record of a battle, "big with the fate of nations," or the description of a noble dame's costume on the occasion of some court ceremony.

Then, mixed with such recollections—mixed so inextricably, that if each deed these same old walls had looked on were orderly set down as they occurred, without remark or comment, the record would furnish at once a bitter satire on the littleness of greatness, and a potent homily against envying the great—we have graver reminiscences of treaties made, and broken; solemn public conferences, and more important private intrigues; together with a far darker background of treacheries and crimes.

There is something singularly stirring to the mind in walking through chambers peopled with the phantoms of such a past. I suppose it is because "*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures, quam quæ sunt oculis sub-*

jecta fidelibus,” that we seem more able to comprehend and sympathize with the emotions of the *dramatis personæ* of a tale, while gazing on each minute detail of the localities of its scene, than when the same story is recounted to us at a distance from it. We knew, perhaps, all the circumstances of an event before, but we seem more completely to realize the facts, and are more vividly impressed with the nobleness or baseness, the beauty or horror of a deed, when we are able to interrogate the mute witnesses in whose immediate presence the thing took place.

Thus, when the old porter, who shows the castle, told me, as I passed a narrow doorway through a wall of immense thickness, “*Ici tomba le Duc de Guise percé de quarante-cinq coups de poignards,*” and then went on to point out to me the other localities of that memorable tragedy, it seemed to me as if I had never rightly understood the manner of the deed before. What! was it on this spot that he fell! Was it on these identical boards that the blood flowed from the mangled body? If the boards had been changed, there would have seemed an evidence the less of the fact. And to this doorpost he clung to save himself as he fell! And there stood the royal bed! And in this recess skulked the coward king,

trembling not at the baseness, but the boldness of the deed; fearing "to look on what he had done," yet eager to assure himself that it was "well done," and that the audacious subject, beneath whose strong will his craven nature quailed, could never more oppress his feebleness.

Yes! all this *really* was. On these same walls on which my eyes are resting, rested the last failing glance of the murdered man's glazing eye, as the bold, proud, ambitious, worldly spirit passed away, leaving unaccomplished all those vast plans and daring hopes—"a world too large" for one short life—for whose achievement he had striven, toiled, and fought, and vexed the earth with turmoil during the term of his existence in it!

How many a human being has since passed that fatal doorway, leading to the chamber of the king, in every variety of mood, of hope, and fear; how many a heart beating with every manifold emotion of successful ambition or gratified revenge; of hope-sick disappointment, or dangerous discontent!

Strange phantasmagoria!

And here on the same spot stand I, the creature of a state of society, fashioned and moulded while yet in the womb of time, by the deeds then done. For through the un-

broken, though frequently untraced chain of causes and consequences, in which every human action is a link, our actual state is influenced and modified more or less perceptibly by the thoughts, and words, and actions, done in the flesh by each figure in the long procession of phantoms which Fancy summons to march in review before her through these vacant halls.

A thousand pardons, kind reader, for having inflicted all this moralizing on thee! Yet who could abstain from "moralizing into a thousand" homilies so suggestive an object as these storied walls. Let us proceed, however, to examine them in a more matter-of-fact spirit.

On entering the great gateway, in the eastern side of the chateau, a large quadrangle presents itself, of which each of the four sides is the work of a different age, and built in a totally different style of architecture. The building is therefore interesting in an architectural point of view, as presenting four sufficient specimens of as many very different periods of the art, assembled on the same spot.

The most ancient portion is the southern side of the quadrangle. This is of the time of Louis XI. It is of red brick, with sharp

pointed gables fronting the court, and is, like its builder, low, mean, and mesquin.

The eastern side, on which the entrance is, is next in date. It was added by Louis XII., and proves that domestic architecture had made very considerable progress since the former building was raised. It is constructed of brick and stone conjointly, is much loftier, more ornamented, and though scarcely deserving to be called handsome, is, perhaps, notwithstanding the quaintness produced by the strongly contrasted colour of the brick and stone, the most picturesque part of the castle. This side of the building contains two peculiarly elegant staircases, one at either extremity, in which the brickwork vaulting, though untouched as I was assured since it was built, was as perfect as on the day it was put together. Some curiously absurd ornamental sculptures in the staircase at the north-east angle of the building had not fared so well. On the outside front, also, of this portion of the chateau, there are a series of grotesque carvings, which the offended delicacy of a more refined generation has mutilated. A range of garrets, such as many a London maid-servant would refuse to sleep in, runs along under the roof of this side of the quadrangle, and are pointed out as the rooms

which were inhabited by the ladies of the court of Catherine de Medicis.

The northern side was next added to the pile by Francis I. Many a specimen yet remains in France of the gorgeous style of building in vogue under that magnificent and splendour-loving monarch. The characteristics of it are strongly marked in the example in question. The richly carved stonework, the multiplication of ornament in every part of the structure, the increased loftiness and airiness of the rooms, the greater number of windows, and the superior magnificence of the material, all declare the lavish expenditure and luxurious taste of Francis I. It is in this part of the building that the murder already alluded to of the Duc de Guise and the proud churchman, his brother, took place. The state apartments are reached by an extremely handsome staircase, which forms, as was frequently the case in the buildings of that period, a round tower in the middle of the façade, which projects beyond it more than half its circumference. The construction of this stair is peculiarly light and elegant. On this side of the court, also, is the hall in which the memorable assembly of the states-general, convoked by Henry III., was

held. It is a fine hall, about a hundred feet long, by sixty broad.

The western side of the quadrangle is the most modern. It was built for Gaston of Orleans, by Mansard, Louis XIV.'s celebrated architect. Of course all Frenchmen, who are ordinarily extremely proud of "le grand monarque," and all belonging to him, although they did murder a better king, his great grandson, think Mansard's building extremely fine. But I confess that to my eye its ponderous, unrelieved masses, its straight lines, and heavy cornices, have infinitely less of grace or beauty than the richer and more fanciful style of the sixteenth century.

At the south-west corner of the quadrangle, between the work of Louis XI. and that of Gaston of Orleans, there is an old round tower of an earlier period than any other part of the present building—a remnant of the feudal fortress of the old counts of Blois—which is now used as a powder-magazine. This was the observatory of Catherine de Medicis, who was a great stargazer. On the top is an open platform, with a stone table, like an altar, in the middle of it. The tower still bears the inscription, "URANÆ SACRUM." I know not whether the machiavellian old

lady ever used it as an *observatory* of terrestrial objects; but it is at all events admirably adapted to such a purpose, commanding, as it does, a splendid view of the town beneath it, and the course of the river, and a wide extent of country on the southern side of it.

What with lingering long in every room, and prying into every nook and corner of the building—to the great irritation and impatience of the old concierge, who wanted to say by rote his oft-repeated obligato accompaniment in each room, and then go on to the next, instead of which I preferred a catechetical method of extracting his information—and what with loitering around the exterior of the chateau, and seeking from what points of view it might be seen to the best advantage, my first day at Blois was well nigh gone before I said adieu to its principal ornament and boast.

The dinner-hour at the Hôtel de l'Europe was five; and as soon as this rather long-some affair was over, I went out to the promenade, and remained lounging there and on the bridge, watching the numerous barges with their large white sails, which a stiff west wind was blowing gallantly up the river,

till it was nearly dark, and then sought the friendly retreat of a café, to enjoy the luxuries of a cup of coffee, a cigar, and "La Presse," till it was time to go to bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

Blois—Roman Aqueduct—The Cathedral—Bishop's Palace—Gardens—School at Play—Evening Service in the Cathedral—"Via Crucis"—Scenic Effect—Fact versus Fancy—Journey to Chambord—Menars-le-Chateau—Situation of Chambord—Anecdotes of the Chateau—Marshal Saxe—Architecture of the Chateau—Return to Blois—Voyage to Amboise—Steamboat aground—The River below Blois—Chaumont—Catherine de Medicis—Arrival at Amboise—The Castle—Its History—The Conspiracy of Amboise—Present State of the Castle—Excavations—Extraordinary Monument—Approach to the Chateau—View from the Terrace—Servants' Offices—"Changement de Decoration"—The Chapel—Carriage Staircase—Departure for Bléré.

THE next day was spent in rambling about the town and strolling along the banks of the river. The upper part of the town contains a good many traces of ancient fortifications and fragments of monastic buildings. There is an aqueduct, too, a monument of an age anterior to the earliest date that can be assigned to the ancient chateau, a bequest to Blois from its some-time masters, the Romans. It has been cut in the living rock by those workers for all time, and being kept in a pro-

per state of cleanliness and freedom from accumulations of earth, still furnishes to the town a copious supply of water, which is distributed by several fountains in different parts of it.

The cathedral is very finely placed, but is not worthy of its situation. From the river bank below, indeed, it makes rather an imposing appearance, showing high above the surrounding buildings a long range of nine handsome gothic windows. But when, with expectations raised by these appearances, I had climbed to the pinnacle on which the church stands, I was disappointed at finding it small, imperfect, and not worth the trouble of climbing to.

Close to the eastern end of it, is a building which was formerly the bishop's palace, but is now—by what sleight of hand process the transformation was performed I did not learn—the residence of the “prefet.” It is a large, heavy building, of no interest; but its gardens form a superb promenade for the inhabitants of the town. The hill at this part of it must have been very nearly precipitous by nature, and it has been rendered quite so by art. The gardens are on the brow of it, and are supported by a lofty stone wall, so that a terrace is formed hanging im-

mediately over the town, and commanding a magnificent view of the river and country beyond it.

It was a lovely day—one of the first really warm days of the year. The wind of yesterday had subsided, and several barges, arrested in their upward voyage to Orleans by the dead calm, lay wind-bound, with their sails heavily hanging from their masts. The sky was perfectly cloudless, and the whole of the wide spread plain on the other side of the river was basking in one unbroken blaze of sunshine. It was a lazy scene; and I sat on a bench at the edge of the terrace, dreamily enjoying the sun, and alternately gazing over the distant view spread out below me, and watching the innumerable little lizards sporting in and out of the crevices between the old grey stones of the lichen-dappled wall, and like myself enjoying the genial warmth, till I was startled from my reverie by a joyous shout, the cause of which was in another moment explained by the tumultuous rushing of a score or so of boys through the iron gate of the garden. They had just been let out of a school held in some part of the municipal buildings, and were followed at a somewhat more sober pace by two young priests, whose duty it appeared to be to superintend their

sports. At all events, they shared them, for the pupils and their ecclesiastical masters began playing peg-top together, with every appearance of the game being as keenly relished by the seniors as the juniors.

I thought it was hardly fair play, for, while I sat looking at them, the laity had no less than three tops split or wounded by the strong arm of the church.

In the evening, as I was walking a little after dusk on the promenade, I was rather surprised at seeing a bright light streaming from all the nine windows of the cathedral. With some little difficulty, from the increasing darkness and the intricate nature of the steep lanes and stairs I had to climb, I stumbled up the hill, till I arrived at the great door of the church, which I found occupied by a considerable congregation, consisting chiefly of women and children.

I soon ascertained that they were engaged in performing a religious exercise, termed a "Via Crucis," or journey of the cross. There are, in every Roman Catholic church, a certain number of pictures, representing different moments of our Saviour's passage from the judgment-seat to the place of his crucifixion, and his death upon the cross. These are termed "stations," and they are so disposed

around the building as to cause a person visiting them all in order to make the tour of the whole church. And he who performs this circuit, pausing before each picture to kneel and repeat certain prescribed prayers appropriated to each station, is said to perform a "Via Crucis." It is a very favourite practice of Romanist devotion, and is not unfrequently assigned as a penance.

It was this exercise which the assembled congregation were now engaged in performing. Three priests, together with several choristers, and a man playing on the serpent, headed the procession, and stopped before every station to chant the appropriate words, after which the people rose from their knees, and, before moving on to the next, received a short exhortation from one of the priests.

Though, in the darkness without, the church had appeared to be perfectly illuminated, yet within it was very scantily lighted. Two or three chandeliers, hanging from the roof of the principal body of the church, cast a considerable light on the windows of the nave; but the sombre, low-browed, side aisle, through which the procession was passing, was left in almost perfect obscurity. And the two wax-tapers, borne by two of the attendant boys, served only to throw a wan

gleam upon the large cross, which was carried by a third child between them, and upon the white figures of the officiating priests and choristers.

The scene had much of striking effect about it, and was well calculated to excite the imagination, and fill the mind with solemn thoughts of the great work accomplished on that dread day, the remembrance of which it was designed to perpetuate. The prostrate crowd, their apparently sincere devotion, and the ancient chant echoing in well-known cadence through the gloomy aisles, affected me; and, notwithstanding all that might be said of the superstitious nature of their worship, and the unscriptural ideas of good works laid up in store, which they attach to the performance of it, I felt myself impelled to forget differences of creed in a common sentiment of devotion, and to suffer my spirit to join their's at least in a general feeling of thankfulness to our common father and benefactor.

In this mood I neared the congregation, for hitherto I had been standing near the west door of the church, and placed myself among the outskirts of the crowd.

The children had evidently been sedulously taught, for boys and girls all chanted the latin responses to the versets chanted by the

priest. But I soon found that, though well taught, they were little educated, and that their minds were far from being engaged on the profitless recitations which they had been drilled into thus making. All sorts of playing and quarrelling were going on, and the intervals between their parts of the service were invariably filled up with chattering. It was impossible to avoid hearing such interpolations as the following :

“ Miserere nobis peccatoribus, Domine ! ”

“ Taisez vous donc, coquin ! ta mère te tansera vertement ! allez ! ”

“ Ave Maria ! ora pro nobis nunc et in horâ mortis nostræ. ”

“ Qu’ est que cela te fait, toi, montarde ! ”
&c. &c.

The solemnity of the scene was entirely dissipated for me, and the rapid tumble from the sublime to the ridiculous shook me so disagreeably, that, when the congregation moved on to the next station, I left the church in much ill-humour with the mummeries of Rome’s latter days.

I will not say, as some might, that it served me right for dallying with the scarlet woman, or attempt to forget that there may be naughty and inattentive children in every congregation. But surely it is not too much to say

that there *must* be such in a church, in many of whose services the mind is not enabled or even expected to take a part, and which consist in the repetition of words totally insignificant to the utterers of them.

As I poked my way back again down the hill, I thought to myself that my night's expedition to Blois cathedral ought to have taught me not to mistake another time excitement of the imagination for elevation of the heart, or the enthusiasm generated by scenic effect for the sounder operations of the understanding.

The next morning I set forth early to visit the chateau de Chambord. This once-celebrated pile of building is situated on the south side of the Loire, half a league from the river, and about four leagues to the south-east from Blois. The road, after crossing the Loire at Blois, runs along the left bank of the river on a raised embankment as far as the little village of St. Die, and then turns away from it to the south.

There is a good view from the road of Madame de Pompadour's former residence of Menars-le-Chateau, on the opposite bank of the river, with its fine gardens mounting in trim terraces one above another, to the top of the little hill which there rises from the side of the Loire.

From St. Die the road lies through some sandy vineyards, and mounts a small hill, from which Chambord is seen. Nothing can well be conceived more cheerless, ugly, and miserable-looking than the situation of it. Placed in the midst of a low, swampy-looking bottom, with its horizon shut in on all sides, it does not possess even the usual compensation for such disadvantages in luxuriant plantations, or rich green vegetation, but looks out on a vacant, unadorned, brown waste, which, though it cannot quite be called desert, certainly can lay but little claim to be styled meadow.

Chambord was originally a manor of the counts of Blois, and came into the possession of the crown with the other dependences of that county. The chateau, as it now exists, was built by Francis I., Henry II., Louis XIII., and Louis XIV., on plans furnished in the first instance by Primatice, but afterwards modified by Mansard. It was here that that celebrated architect first made the experiment of adding the apartments, which have from him taken the appellation of "Mansardes."

Louis XIV. was in his youth particularly fond of Chambord, until he determined on building Versailles; and it was here that, in

the month of October, 1670, Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was acted for the first time. It was unlucky that Louis did not make up his mind where he would live a little sooner, for when he abandoned Chambord he had just expended 2,451,403 francs on it.

Louis XV. gave it to the Marechal de Saxe, as an appropriate reward for his services to France, and he ended his life here on the 30th of November, 1750. He had lived and died in the Lutheran religion, with reference to which the queen remarked at his death, "Il est bien fâcheux qu'on ne puisse pas dire un *De Profundis* pour un homme, qui a fait chanter tant de *'Te Deum*."

Le Marechal de Saxe had here, by the especial permission of the king, two regiments, which the old soldier used to amuse himself by keeping in the most perfect state of discipline. He superintended daily their parade and evolutions, and kept up in all respects the forms and observances of a garrison. What a prototype en grande of my *Uncle Toby*!

The plan on which the chateau is built is whimsical, and the appearance of it grotesque in the extreme. One large tower in the centre of the building is the loftiest part of it, and contains a curiously-constructed double stair,

which is handsomely executed. The principal building, or donjon of the castle, is a solid square built around this, and having at each angle a little tower not so high as that in the centre. Another range of building lower still surrounds this, and has also a turret at each angle, so that the entire mass assumes a pyramidal form, which, thickly set with all its little cupola-topped towers and innumerable chimneys, makes a strange-looking, but far from handsome whole. The appearance of it is rendered also still further grotesque and absurd by the white stone, of which it is built, being studded with a vast number of circular and diamond-shaped bits of black slate let into its surface.

An old woman who inhabits some of the rooms, and who is the sole occupant of the immense mass, now the property of the Duc de Bordeaux, walked with me through a vast number of empty halls and apartments of all sizes, grumbling all the way she went at the thorough drafts which were whistling through the long suites of rooms in every direction, and declaring that she could not think, for her part, what the people had been dreaming about to build a house all doors and windows like that.

There is but little to gratify curiosity or

excite interest in the perambulation. Some of the apartments are still decorated with the F and the Salamander, Francis I.'s well known device, sculptured in relief, on the stone; and others exhibit the ridiculously inflated vanity of Louis XIV., making itself manifest in his cognizance — a noonday sun, with the motto, “*Nec pluribus impar.*” In those parts of the building constructed by Henry II., the crescent of Diana of Poitiers, and the H and D entwined, are yet to be seen. But all the fine frescoes, after designs by Leonardo da Vinci, which were begun here under Francis I., and afterwards finished by Jean Cousin, have perished. The pane of glass, too, said to have been still in its place up to the revolution, on which Francis I. had written with a diamond,

“*Souvent femme varie ;
Mal habile qui s’y fie!*”

has vanished.

After I had walked through a mile or two of corridors, and staircases, and echoing halls, and deserted bowers, and had remunerated, very inadequately I fear, the old dame for the rheumatism she must have caught in accompanying me, I returned to Blois in time to leave it by the steamboat coming from Orleans. This arrived at Blois about one o’clock,

on its route to Tours, and came alongside of the little quay long enough to allow some dozen or so of passengers to disembark, and about as many more to supply their places on board.

My present destination was Amboise, which we ought to have reached in a little more than two hours. We did not, however, arrive there till past four, having been detained a long time by running aground, an accident it seems of no unfrequent occurrence, although the boat we were then in drew only ten inches of water. They generally, however, get off with much less difficulty than it cost us on this occasion ; for the stream was running very swiftly, and the boat got athwart the sand-bank. A little nutshell of an iron boat, which they carry in case of such disasters, was hoisted into the water, and a man sent in it to fix an anchor some hundred yards or so above the bank we were on. To this a cable was attached, and thus, after no small difficulty, and by the exertions of all the crew, and most part of the passengers, we at length succeeded in hauling ourselves off.

The banks of the river improve somewhat in appearance as we advance westward. The country is neither so low nor so monotonous. But I have not seen any thing as yet which

can justify the reputation the Loire enjoys for beauty. The stream itself is as much disfigured by sands as above Blois.

There is, however, one object which occupies the eye satisfactorily for some distance. This is the chateau de Chaumont, which is equidistant from Blois and Amboise, being four leagues and a half from either. It is situated on the top of a well-wooded hill on the southern bank of the river, and must command a fine view of a long reach of the stream.

This chateau was sold about the middle of the sixteenth century, to Catherine de Medicis, by the lord of La Rochefoucauld, for the sum of a hundred and twenty thousand francs: and it was here that this remarkable woman — a contemner of vulgar prejudices, yet herself the slave of the absurdest of them, a ruler of kings, yet herself the tool of others, unscrupulous, yet bigoted, shrewd, yet weak, crafty, yet duped — was wont to retire from the more active cares of her tortuous political intrigues, and, surrounded by astrologers and magicians, apply herself to studies, which she fondly hoped would enable her to see the issue of those intricate and crooked paths, in which her ceaseless plans and machinations had involved her.

Shortly after losing sight of Chaumont, the castle of Amboise, towering high above the surrounding objects on its lofty rock, becomes visible, and the boat presently shot under the bridge which crosses the river opposite the town, leaving me and two or three others to find our way to shore in a punt, as before at Meung.

The river is divided at Amboise into two streams by a long strip of an island, one of which is crossed by a stone bridge, and the other by one of wood. The steamer took the northern or right hand stream ; but the town is on the southern bank. So that when our punt had landed us on the island (which it took us a good while to reach, as the current is there very rapid, and the boat had drawn us several yards down the stream while an old man, who could not move very fast, was disembarking), we had still to cross the island to the other stream before we reached the town.

It was more than half-past four, therefore, by the time I had found my quarters for the night in a very good and unusually clean little inn, called the Boule d'Or. But I set forth, as soon as this was accomplished, on a reconnoitering ramble through the town, with the intention of examining a little the

remarkable position of the chateau before visiting the interior of it.

The antiquaries dispute a good deal whether or not there is sufficient evidence for supposing Amboise to have been the site of a fortress in the time of the Romans. Chalmel, the historian of Tourraine, seems to think that there is not. The popular tradition in the country says that Julius Cæsar founded a castle here. And this is, to my mind, corroborated by the nature of the locality; for, knowing as we do that Tourraine was governed by the Romans for five hundred and thirty-eight years, I do not think it at all likely that a spot so eminently calculated for the purpose, and so remarkable in every way, should have escaped their observation, or not have been turned to advantage.

A small rivulet, called the Amasse, falls into the Loire at this point, flowing round the base of a chalk rock, which runs up precipitously to a very considerable height between the two rivers. Some deep cutting has completely separated this lofty headland from the rising ground behind it, and has left it a completely isolated platform, raised to a height of about a hundred feet, on a rock whose sides are as inaccessible as a wall.

The foundation of the present building,

however, is due to Charles VII. Louis XI., Charles VIII., and Francis I., all added to it. It was alienated from the crown by Louis XV., and became the property of the Duc de Choiseul. It afterwards passed into the possession of the Duc de Penthièvre, and now belongs to Louis Philippe, as his heir.

It was frequently inhabited by Louis XI., and still more so by Charles VIII., who was born and died there. In subsequent reigns, also, the court often came there for short periods, and of course, therefore, the chateau of Amboise has its share of those tragic reminiscences which followed surely in the train of the kings of France of that period.

But the most important event in its history is the conspiracy against the Guises, in 1560, which is known in history as the "conjuration d'Amboise." Henry II. died in 1559. The young king, Francis II., was weak in character, and a minor. His mother Catherine and the Guises shared all power and authority between them. The principles of protestantism, potently assisted by political jealousies and party feeling, were rapidly spreading, and the persecutions, proscriptions, and cruelties of the Guises, and the more bigoted of the Catholic party, kept pace with them. Great was the general discontent and indig-

nation throughout the country; and the Guises, not sufficiently cautious, or not sufficiently all-powerful with the victim of their lust of power and place, had not been able to keep from Francis himself all knowledge of the feelings of the nation, and the cause of them.

“On m’assure,” he is recorded to have said, with infinite naïveté, to the princes of Lorraine, after the attempt of the conspirators to surprise the court, “on m’assure que l’on n’en veut qu’à vous; je voudrais donc que vous vous éloignassiez pendant quelque temps, pour savoir au juste ce qui en est.” Poor boy!

But the Guises stuck tight to him, and the country was plunged in civil war.

The “conjunction d’Amboise” was one of the first partial outbreaks of that tremendous fire of civil discord, which so soon afterwards blazed forth over the whole country—the first spittings of the volcano, whose dull, sullen roar had for some time past been heard coming up from the social depths of the nation.

A meeting of some of the heads of the Protestant party took place in the chateau of the Duke of Bourbon at Vendôme. Some of the members of this assembly were not prepared to adopt such measures as were then proposed.

But at a second meeting a plan of action was determined on, and the execution of it entrusted to a certain gentleman of Perigord, named La Renaudie. This man travelled over France, and indeed into Switzerland and the neighbouring provinces of Germany, for the purpose of seeking partizans. The hatred of the Guises was almost universal, and he was eminently successful in his search. All seemed to favour the hopes of the conspirators.

At last, when every thing was nearly ready for the attempt, the object of which was to make away with the Guises, and obtain possession of the king's person, La Renaudie communicated the secret to one Desavenelles, an advocate of Paris, who had lent his house for a meeting of the conspirators. This man, fearing what the result might be to himself in case the project should miscarry, went to the secretary of the Duke de Guise, and revealed to him the whole plot.

The court, which was at Blois at that time, was considerably alarmed ; and it was determined to remove the king immediately to Amboise, a place far stronger naturally, and then in a much better state of preparation for resistance. This removal somewhat disconcerted the conspirators ; but, notwithstanding

this, and sundry other symptoms, proving plainly enough that the suspicions at least of the court were awakened, if not that the plot was entirely betrayed, they determined to risk every thing rather than abandon the attempt.

On the evening of the tenth of March, in the year 1561, considerable numbers of the conspirators had dispersed themselves over the country, in all the villages and hamlets around Amboise. Among others, the Baron of Castelnau, with a troop of partizans, entered one of the faubourgs of Tours. Here the governor, who was in the interest of the Guises, immediately on hearing of the arrival of armed men in the town, went in person, with a party of soldiers, to satisfy himself of the character of his guests, and, not liking their appearance, was about to arrest Castelnau. This produced an onset of the two parties, in which the governor's men were worsted. They ran through the streets, calling on the inhabitants to assist them ; but a very large proportion of the population of Tours having embraced the new doctrines, and the political principles connected with them, the citizens remained tranquilly in their houses, and refused to pay any attention to the appeal. So the Baron of Castelnau and his men marched off to join an-

other detachment of the conspirators at Noizay, a village about half way between Tours and Amboise. Information of all this, however, was conveyed to the Duke of Nemours, who immediately marched to Noizay, and surrounded it with a larger body of troops than that of the malecontents. Upon which Castelnau and his party most inconceivably gave up their arms, and were all marched prisoners to Amboise.

The king's troops were equally successful in every direction, defeating the conspirators in detail, before the various dispersed parties had time to unite themselves into a body, which would have made the issue of the struggle more doubtful, and might have entirely changed the subsequent destinies of France.

La Renaudie, however, was meanwhile making a last effort to gather together a sufficient body of the insurgents from the dispersed fragments of the different parties, to have some chance of being able to make head against the royal forces. He had been, before he undertook the conduct of this conspiracy, a man of broken fortunes and not unsullied character; and he had shown in the management of it a degree of ability in projecting, and activity in executing similar enterprises, which would have made him a dangerous, as

his position rendered him a desperate man had he escaped upon this occasion.

But such was not fated to be the case. As he was riding through the forest of Chateau-Regnault, a small town a few miles to the north of Amboise, with a small band only of followers, he was encountered by his own cousin, Pardaillan, at the head of two hundred of the king's horse. Pardaillan instantly spurred forward upon him, pistol in hand, but was laid dead at his feet by a couple of blows of La Renaudie's sabre. He himself, however, was shot dead almost in the same instant by one of Pardaillan's followers. His body was carried to Amboise, where it was hung on a gibbet erected in the centre of the bridge, and was afterwards quartered.

As for the prisoners, who had been brought in to Amboise in great numbers, the chiefs were thrown into dungeons, to be afterwards interrogated, while the common soldiers were either strung up in long lines on the walls of the chateau, or thrown with their hands and feet tied into the Loire, without any form of process or trial whatsoever.

Nevertheless, there remained a vast number of prisoners in the dungeons of the castle, and the king, by the advice of the chancellor, François Olivier, wished that their lives should

be spared. But, just as the balance on which the existence of so many human beings depended was inclining towards mercy, a most unfortunate and imprudent attempt was made by a certain captain, named La Motte, to surprise the chateau. His own fate and that of all his fellow-prisoners was then sealed; and fifteen hundred men were that day condemned to die in the town of Amboise.

Castelnau, and many of the principal conspirators, were beheaded in the presence of the court, which blushed not, says the historian, to come and feed their eyes and gratify their vengeance with the bloody spectacle. The remainder were hung. The market-places and streets of Amboise stood thick with gibbets, yet could not supply space enough for all who had to die. Many were thrown into the Loire. Yet enough remained to encumber the streets of the town with the dead.

High on the castle rock the triumphant Guise looked down upon the frightful scene. But the very air became loathsome with the unburied corpses of their slaughtered enemies; and the effluvia from the infected town rose even to the walls of the lordly castle, and pursued the inmates to their chambers.

The chancellor, François Olivier, is re-

corded to have died of grief and horror at a carnage which he had in vain endeavoured to avert. The scene became too frightful and too loathsome even for the appetite of revenge and hate, and it was decided that the court should be removed to Tours.

So ended the "conjunction d'Amboise," one of the most bloody tragedies of those blood-stained days, and certainly the most memorable event in the annals of the little town.

In its latter days the chateau had been suffered to fall very much out of repair, till it came into the hands of its present owner. A large portion of it, indeed, was destroyed during the revolution; but the remaining parts have been put into good order and thorough repair. I observed, as I strolled around the foot of the castle rock, a large number of labourers at work, who, I found, were engaged in boring a passage for the highroad through the very middle of the mass on which the chateau stands. A way was already opened from one side to the other, through which I passed. It will not be long, therefore, before this singularly situated road is completed.

The huge chalk cliff on which the castle stands is said to be riddled in every direction by subterranean excavations, of which some

are known, but many more, though known to exist, have never been explored or their extent ascertained. Under these circumstances, great care must have been necessary in testing the soundness and strength of that part of the rock, through which the new opening was to be made ; though I suppose that the vaults and dungeons below the castle could hardly have extended to so great a depth as to interfere with this new tunnel through the foot of the cliff.

The most remarkable of the buildings on the platform of the rock, as seen from the town below, is a tiny little chapel, which, isolated from the rest of the chateau, stands on a pinnacle at the very extremest verge of the cliff. Its elegant form and delicate stonework show themselves to great advantage against the clear sky ; and its extraordinary position makes it an extremely striking object from almost every part of the town below.

I did not intend to visit the interior of the chateau till the next morning, as it was getting rather too late in the evening to see to advantage the view which I expected to enjoy from the top of the rock. But as there remained an hour of light after I had satisfied myself with viewing it in every possible direc-

tion" from below, I passed under an old gateway—the last remnant of the ancient fortifications of the place—and took a turn through the streets of the old town. It would be impossible for a stranger, dropped into any corner of Amboise, to mistake it for a modern town; but there is little to remark in each individual building. In one of the churches, however, is a monument curious in itself, and still more so in connection with the legend attached to it.

In the church of St. Florentin there is a sepulchral monument, representing a sarcophagus with the figure of a dead Christ in it, and seven other figures standing around it. These represent St. John the Baptist, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, and two others of the women mentioned in the gospel. The curious part of the matter is, that these eight figures are all portraits, to each of which local history enables us to assign an original. But far more extraordinary still is it, that the members of such a *family party* as these figures represent, should have been willing to be thus handed down to posterity in connection with each other, and that, moreover, under the semblances of the holy personages they have

selected to personate in this strangely chosen masquerade.

The figure of Christ represents Philbert Babou de la Bourdaisière, to whose memory the monument was erected. The St. John and Nicodemus are his sons, Jacques and Philbert. One of the holy women represents his wife, dame Marie Gaudin; and the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, and the other female figure, are the likenesses of her three daughters. This is all vastly well! but who is the eighth statue? Who is the tall, handsome figure which personifies "the just man, who waited for the kingdom of God?" Joseph of Arimathea, reader, is no other than the gallant Francis I., who thus takes his place among this "united" family, so highly honoured by this permanent association with their sovereign, no less naturally than condescendingly, seeing that the exemplary mother, as well as all three of the young ladies, who have so appropriately chosen their characters in the family group, were all of them, one after the other, his mistresses. With what honest pride must the Babous of after-days have looked on this permanent memorial of the family honours! And how sweet and wholesome a lesson of morality must the "rustic moralists," who frequented the church in

which this edifying monument was erected, have drawn from the touching story so well told by it!

Early the next morning I presented myself before the gate of the castle, and requested permission to visit it. The old porter looked out of a window in the face of the cliff, out of which his dwelling is hollowed, and admitted me by pulling a string. This gateway is about half way up the rock, and must have offered great facilities for defence. A road raised on an artificial mound leads up to it, and there enters the face of the cliff. A steep ascent leads thence by a covered way up to the platform above, in the midst of which it emerges.

On reaching it, the visitor of these days finds himself in the midst of a pretty well-kept garden. Opposite to him, on the extremity of the platform, towards the Loire, is what remains of the ancient chateau, which has, under its present proprietor, assumed the appearance of a moderate-sized, though venerable-looking and picturesque gentleman's house.

At some hundred yards distance, on the western side of the cliff, overlooking the town, is the exquisite little chapel above mentioned. Along the edge of the rock, to the north and

west, is a magnificent terrace protected by a parapet wall, commanding a glorious view of the valley of the Loire. Blois is visible to the east, and the towers of the cathedral of Tours still more distinctly to the west. Behind the present chateau, on the part of the rock farthest from the town, are plantations, and "jardins à l'Anglais," with some fine trees.

The whole of this large space was formerly occupied by the buildings of the castle, which must have resembled a town rather than a single residence. As it is now altered it must make a delightful dwelling. It is very seldom that any of the royal family come there, however. The king himself has never visited Amboise.

A servant in the royal livery, who was watering some flowers in the garden, left his occupation to show me the interior of the building. There is not much of it, and the rooms are fitted up in a style of great simplicity. The servants' offices are the most interesting part of the present fabric. These are situated in excavations of the rock, looking out upon that face of it which commands the Loire. They were formerly occupied by "offices" of a very different sort, which were as indispensable in the arrangements of a feudal fortress

as those which have succeeded them are to the abodes of the present generation. The alterations which the citizen-king has effected in this part of his mansion are amusingly characteristic of the times we live in; and the various destinations of the modernized, but still strangely-shaped, and still more strangely situated chambers through which I was shown, contrasted whimsically enough, and pleasantly too, with the former purposes of the same localities. Thus the "patisserie" is made, where the "question" was formerly put to the victims of judicial barbarism. The "argenterie" is safely secured in a *ci-devant* dungeon; and the "batterie de cuisine" occupies a gallery along the face of the rock, from which a battery of another sort was wont to pour its less agreeable, though, perhaps, not less dangerous contents.

On quitting these transmogrified chambers, my conductor took me across the garden to the little chapel. This also has been entirely restored and repaired by the present owner. It is a perfect gothic church in miniature. It looks like a toy; and the beauty and justness of its tiny proportions, the dainty delicacy of its carved stone-work, and the thorough state of repair in which it has been put, make it a perfect bijou. The little building is twelve

paces in length, and ten across the transepts. Behind the altar are some steps, which go down to a chamber hollowed out of the rock beneath, which was formerly a place of sepulture, but has been turned into a sacristy.

When I had sufficiently admired this little model of a church, and had at length satiated my eye with gazing over the view commanded by the terraces of the chateau, I was about to descend by the same road which had conducted me up. But my guide told me that there still remained what he considered the greatest curiosity about the place. This proved to be a huge tower situated at the south side of the rock, and reaching from the level of the town to the top of the platform, and containing a spiral inclined plane, by which horses and even carriages might mount to the top of the cliff. The walls were in several places marked by the boxes of wheels, which had scraped them in passing. The idea of such a stair, if stair it can be called, was not quite new to me, as I have seen a similar one at Stuttgart, by which the knights used to ascend to their chambers at the top of the ancient castle of that city, without dismounting from their steeds.

I returned from my early visit to the castle to the "Boule d'Or," which I strongly re-

commend to any one who may find themselves in want of "entertainment for man or horse," in the neighbourhood of Amboise, just in time to depart, though at the expense of doing so without any breakfast, by a diligence which was passing through the town, to Bléré.

CHAPTER IX.

Bléré—The One Fact in its History—Chenonceaux—Its History—Its Last Proprietor before the Revolution—Its Architecture—Beaulieu—Loches—Valley of the Indre—Picturesque Scenery—The Chateau of Loches—Anecdote of its History—Agnes Sorel—Her Tomb—Inscriptions—The Collegiate Church—Town of Loches—Remarkable Sign of an Inn—How an Old Woman made Better Soup than she intended—Journey to Tours.

Bléré is a little town a few leagues to the south of Amboise, with nothing whatever to distinguish it from many another one. But there were brave men before Agamemnon. And so I doubt not there have passed deeds of pith and moment at Bléré. Both have perished for the same reason, “*caruerunt quia vate sacro.*” Where human hearts have been beating and human passions working weal and woe for fifteen hundred years, since Bléré was founded by one Blireius, in the middle of the fourth century, it cannot be that nothing was done bravely, said wisely, thought nobly, or suffered patiently, which deserved to be handed down to posterity, besides the interesting fact that Philippe-le-bel and his queen

slept there on the night of the twenty-third of August, in the year of our Lord, 1301. Yet, with the exception of a long list of the names of their seigneurs, this is all that I have been able to discover of the history of Bléré. Modest Bléréians! Here have ye been unobtrusively eating and drinking, being born and dying, for fifteen hundred years, without ever dreaming that any of your sayings or doings were worth recording for the instruction of your descendants!

The unmarked little town would have been as much neglected by me as it apparently has been by every body else, had it not been for its neighbourhood to Chenonceaux, a spot to which fortune's lottery has assigned a far different fate.

This celebrated chateau is but a league and a half from Bléré, and immediately on arriving at the town, I set out to walk thither. Chenonceaux was a "châtellenie" under its feudal lords, (one of whom, Jean Marques, in the reign of Charles VI., received an English garrison into his castle, in punishment for which the chateau was dismantled, and the woods cut "à hauteur d'infamie,") till it was taken possession of by Anne de Montmorenci on behalf of the crown, in 1535, on the ground of its last proprietor, Thomas Bohier, having

died a hundred and ninety thousand francs in the king's debt.

From this period dates the celebrity of Chenonceaux. Successively the possession and the habitation of Diana of Poitiers, Catherine de Medicis, and Louise de Lorraine, widow of Henry III., it was frequently during this period honoured by the séjour of royalty. The chateau then passed into the family of Vendôme. Louis Joseph de Vendôme, elder brother of Philippe de Vendôme, grand prieur de France, died without children in 1712, leaving the estate and mansion of Chenonceaux to his wife, Marie Anne de Bourbon Condé. Her daughter by a former husband sold it in 1720 to the Duc de Bourbon, who again sold it in 1733 to the well-known Claude Dupin.

Then commenced the second period of Chenonceaux's celebrity. Its new proprietor assembled annually within its walls all that was most distinguished in literature and art, during that brilliant period of both in France. M. Dupin himself was the author of a refutation of his friend Montesquieu's book, which he entitled "Observations sur un livre intitulé, de L'esprit des Lois." It was printed at Paris in 1753, in three volumes, 8vo., and is exceedingly rare, as the author was induced

to suppress the whole edition, of which five or six copies only escaped. It is said that Montesquieu was so much alarmed at the appearance of it, that he prevailed on Madame de Pompadour to use her influence with Dupin to induce him to suppress it.

“ Il est digne de remarque,” says Chalmel, in his history of Tourraine, “ que chaque siècle, depuis le quinzième, offre a Chenonceaux sa physionomie particulière. Manoir d’une famille factieuse pendant les guerres que l’Anglais faisait à la France ; sous François premier, monument de la protection, que ce prince accordait aux arts, ainsi que de son goût pour les plaisirs ; témoin de la magnificence et des intrigues de Catherine de Médicis ; et peu de temps après du généreux pardon accordé par le grand Henri aux fanatiques qui osaient lui disputer un trône dont il fit la gloire et les délices ; retraite au seizième siècle de la pieuse veuve de Henry III., et au dix-septième de l’un des plus grands capitaines du règne de Louis XIV. ; il était réservé à M. et à M^e Dupin de marquer à leur tour l’époque brillant du dix-huitième siècle, en réunissant dans leur riant asile les personnages les plus illustres ou les plus aimables de cette période si féconde en grands hommes, parmi lesquels se faisaient encore remarquer

M. Dupin par son goût et son érudition, M^e Dupin par sa beauté, ses graces et son esprit. Là J. J. Rousseau, qui leur fut attaché quelque temps en qualité de secrétaire, composa plusieurs pièces pour le théâtre du château ; sur lequel fut joué pour la première fois le Devin de Village.

“ Chenonceaux réunissait habituellement dans la belle saison l'élite de ce que les lettres, les sciences, et les arts, offraient de plus distingué, tels que Fontenelle, Mairan, Buffon, le comte de Tressan, Montesquieu, le marquis de St. Aulaire, l'abbé de Saint-Pierre, Mably, Condillac, son frère, M. M. de Sainte Palaye, Lord Bolingbrocke et Voltaire *lui-même*. Au milieu de tant de célèbres personnages brillaient aussi Mesdames de Boufflers, de Luxembourg, de Rohan-Chabot, de Forcalquier, de Mirepoix, de Tencin, et la Marquise du Defant, tous attirés, moins peut-être par le charme des lieux que par celui de la société de leurs maîtres.”

In the midst of all this wit and beauty, gaiety and splendour, how importunate and disagreeable is the recollection that the wealthy host was a “fermier general;” and the reflection which *will* follow on the state of those from whose hard-earned sous the colossal fortunes of these financial leviathans were accumulated!

With this recollection in one's mind, it seems doubly a miracle that Chenonceaux should have escaped the storm of the revolution. Yet such was the case. M^e Dupin, also, the mistress of these gay fêtes, survived the social system, of which they were the offspring, and died in the strangely-changed scene of them in 1799, in the ninety-third year of her age.

The building is a huge, strangely-constructed mass, built in part over the river Cher. Diana of Poitiers built the bridge communicating with the other side of the river, and constructed the kitchens of the chateau in the three first piers of it. Chenonceaux, however, is now chiefly worth visiting for the sake of those portions of its architecture which mark the moment of the transition from the gothic forms to those of the renaissance.

From Chenonceaux I returned to Bléré, and went on to Loches the same afternoon. Towards Loches the road passes through the remains of the ancient forest of the same name, parts of which contain some fine old trees, and offer to the eye several inviting vistas of Ruysdaelian scenery. About a mile before reaching Loches we passed through the long, dirty, straggling street of Beaulieu; an appellation which a local writer very

justly admits to be such a misnomer, that he is led to believe that the latin name, from which the French is taken, was "Belli-locus" rather than "Bellus-locus;" the place having doubtless deserved that name at some time or other, which it certainly never could have done the other.

Leaving Beaulieu in possession of its name, which, after all, it may lay quite as good a claim to as many a "Bellevue Place," "Parasite Row," and "Prospect Terrace," which I have met with in my travels, we crossed the wide valley of the Indre, the river which, in conjunction with the Loire, gives its name to the department, and entered Loches.

There was yet time before the light failed for a stroll up the valley, which strongly invited it. I never saw a lovelier scene of its kind, or one more adapted to the pencil. The broad flat bottom of the valley is occupied with watermeads of the freshest green, and rich with most luxuriant herbage, through which the river serpentines its lazy, capricious way, visiting either side of the vale, by turns, as if to assert, like the proud descendant of a fallen dynasty, its ancient right to fill the whole valley with its waters, which it is no longer able to exercise.

The whole of this irrigated space, as far

up the valley as the eye could reach, was studded over with various herds, which were gradually gathering into different groups, and beginning, "full of the pasture," to move lazily and slowly towards their respective homesteads on the gently-rising wooded hills, which bound the valley. To the right, the quiet little town, and above it, hanging over the watermeads below, the isolated rock which rises above the country around, as if for the express purpose of affording a site for its ancient castle, are leading features in the landscape. The remains of the once extensive chateau, with the collegiate church, formerly dependent on it, and included within its precincts, crown this eminence; and are precisely in that stage of decay which harmonises best with the soft and tranquil nature of the surrounding scenery.

The rugged masses of broken walls, and rent towers, still grimly frowning amid the ruins that attest the final victory of time, such as those with which Salvator loved to enhance the savage wildness of his landscapes, would mar the dreamy serenity of these peaceful fields. But the picturesquely time-stricken fragments of the venerable building, still habitable, though not by princes or nobles, and the crumbling towers of the old church,

with their quaint pointed roofs, are in perfect keeping with the other features of the scene. On the other side of the valley, at a greater distance, the tall, handsome tower of Beaulieu church, formerly belonging to a rich convent of Benedictines, makes an imposing object, and assists much in the composition of the picture. Over all, the rich, warm rays of the setting sun were throwing a golden light, sparkling on the river where it was here and there visible, brightening the ever-returning youthful verdure of the trees and pastures, and playfully mocking the hoary age of man's decaying creations with a fleeting gleam of youth-like light and cheerfulness.

As I returned from my walk, after the last horizontal rays had vanished from the valley, the curfew-bell of Loches was ringing out "the knell of parting day," and mingled pleasingly its softened sounds with the rippling of the many little streams, by which the water of the Indre is made to irrigate every part of the valley.

I have rarely enjoyed a walk more than I did this evening's stroll in the valley of the Indre beneath Loches; and I returned to the inn, at which the diligence had deposited me, to record this in my note-book as decidedly a "dies cretâ notandus."

A couple of hours the next morning, before breakfast, were employed in examining the interior of the town and the remains of the castle. The principal remaining part of this is now used as a court-house for the despatch of the business of the arrondissement, of which Loches is the chef-lieu.

It is a place of sombre souvenirs, having been used for several generations as a state prison. When, in the list of governors of this castle, we read the name of Oliver Daim, Louis XI.'s well-known barber — a name at which men used to tremble, and which posterity has doomed to an immortality of infamy as lasting as that of his master—we are at no loss to know what was the destination of the fortress, to which was appointed so redoubtable a governor. He was in fact placed there, as an historian of Loches says: “*moins comme gouverneur, que comme geôlier du chateau.*”

The infamous Cardinal Baluc was one of his prisoners here, after having been for some time shut up in one of the celebrated iron cages—his own invention, according to tradition — on the walls of Plessis les Tours. Baluc's crime was treason, in betraying the secrets of Louis XI.'s cabinet to his detested enemy, Charles of Burgundy. His treachery

ought to have shewn Louis that his plan of confiding every thing to men of low extraction, who owed every thing to his bounty, was not a sure means of securing their gratitude, and should have taught him the folly of expecting that a man whom he knew to be an unprincipled scoundrel, and whom he required to be so unscrupulously to others, should be faithful and honest towards him. But such are ever the inconsistencies of knavish cunning.

The principal lion at Loches is the tomb of Agnes Sorel, or Seurelle, rather, as the name is written in all the inscriptions of the time. It was formerly in the collegiate church, where her body was buried — her heart and bowels having been interred at Jumièges — but was removed most unreasonably and sacrilegiously by Napoleon, as the people there say; but, in fact, by his officer, to the buildings of the sous-prefecture, where it is now shewn to the curious, in a little, damp, half-ruined cell. When Charles died, and Louis XI. succeeded him, the canons of Loches, knowing the dislike he had always borne to her, requested his permission to turn her monument out of their church. But the king bid them “*respecter la cendre de la belle des belles;*” unless, indeed, they chose to give up the two thousand golden crowns which Agnes

had left to them by will. He, however, gave them six thousand francs more to assist in quieting their consciences.

The monument consists of a figure of Agnes, reclining on an altar-tomb, bearing several inscriptions. The following records the removal of it to its present situation.

“ Les Chanoines de Loches, enrichis de ses dons,
Demandèrent à Louis XI.

D'eloigner son tombeau de leur cœur.
J'y consens, dit il ; mais rendez la dot.

Le tombeau y resta.

Un archevêque de Tours moins juste
Le fit reléguer dans une chapelle.

A la revolution il fut détruit.

Des hommes sensibles recueillirent les restes d'Agnès

Et le general Pommeroul, préfet d'Indre-et-Loire,

Releva le mausolée de la seule maîtresse de nos rois

Qui ait bien mérité de sa patrie,

En mettant pour prix à ses faveurs

L'expulsion des Anglais hors de la France.

Sa restauration eut lieu l'an MDCCCVI.

Among several ancient inscriptions I will transcribe only one, as a notable specimen of the talents of that day for overcoming the almost insurmountable difficulties, which those Quixotic versifiers imposed upon themselves to such a degree as to render rhythm or reason out of the question. It will be observed that not only do the following lines rhyme both at the end and in the middle, but that the thirteen first of them form an acrostic of
AGNES SEURELLE.

It must be owned that some parts of it are sufficiently obscure, and not a little irreverent.

“ *Astra petit mollis Agnes, redimitaque flore
 Grato cœlicolis, hanc credo vigere decore.
 Nulla sub æthereo thalamo permansit imago,
 Ejus namque Deo placuit sublimis origo,
 Simplex alloquiis, et libera munera dando
 Sacris ecclesiis, et egenis subveniendo.
 Eripuit pariter animam mors atque cruorem,
 Venarum per iter solitum præstare decorem,
 Rexit Vernonis, Issolduni quoque gentem.
 Effleat hinc omnis ipsam populus morientem.
 Limina Belaltam Vincennarum comitantem
 Læta per hanc vitam tenuit turrim resonantem,
 Et Roquasereria fuit illi subdita jure.
 Illi propitia sit virginis optio puræ
 Quam pingi voluit ratio de jure Ducissam ;
 Nam titulis decevit ornari talibus ipsam.
 Anno milleno nono, simul et quadrageno
 Cum quadracenteno decessit ab orbe sereno ;
 Nona dies Februi vitam cum sanguine movit :
 Prosint spiritui quæ sæpe precamina vovit.
 Et si defunctæ nomen cognoscere curas,
 Metrorum primas tredecim conjunge figuras.”*

If difficulties overcome be tokens of success, it will be admitted that this is the production of a successful poet.

The chateau of Loches, when entire, must have been an immense building. The walls and gates which surrounded its precincts yet remain, and inclose, besides that part of its remains which is now the sous-prefecture, two fine old towers, now used as a prison, the old collegiate church, whose quaint architecture and circular-headed arches attest a high de-

gree of antiquity, and several modern dwellings. From two or three points of this inclosure a good view may be obtained over the valley which was the scene of my last night's walk; but the best is from a balcony at the back of the sous-prefecture.

Besides the buildings which have been mentioned as occupying the elevated platform of the chateau, Loches has sundry other relics of the feudal days, such as bits of the town wall, one or two of the old gates, with their peaked roofs and grim little iron-grated windows, and a few ancient houses. On one of these, which had become a little cabaret in its old age, though it had evidently seen better days, I observed, affixed as a sign, a representation of Charon in his boat, ferrying over the Styx a very jolly-looking soul in a cocked hat and blue coat, who had a huge bottle in his hand, from which he was offering the grim old boatman a sup.

I left Loches at three in the afternoon by a diligence which passed through it from the south, and reached Tours a little after eight. On quitting Loches the road passes under a high calcareous bank, which in this place bounds the valley of the Indre. The whole of this, as far as it extends, is hollowed out into a vast number of truly troglodytical ha-

bitations, the chimneys of them appearing at the top of the cliff like so many little volcanoes.

An old woman in the diligence told a long story about a good wife, who inhabited one of them, finding her "soupe maigre" one Friday particularly good to her surprise but great contentment, till, at the bottom of the pot, she found a snake which had fallen into it down the chimney. The snake made excellent soup, and if it had happened on any other day it would have been a piece of good luck, and there would have been an end of it. But here had the good soul been eating "*gras*" on a Friday. She thought the snake was a young one of the old serpent's, expressly sent to fling himself into her pot, and be made soup of—a martyr to the bad cause, for the perdition of her soul. She hurried to the curé, and assured him, with tears in her eyes, that, though the soup *had* tasted particularly good, she had not the slightest notion of what was in the pot till she came to the bottom of it; on the strength of which assurance the good priest gave her absolution, admonishing her only to put a cover on her pot for the future—on Fridays.

The remainder of the journey to Tours presented nothing of particular interest. The

road lies through a country rich in that species of beauty which arises from all the agreeable associations connected with luxuriant crops, thriving industry, and all the indications of agricultural prosperity and abundant harvests, but possessing none of the attractions of picturesque scenery.

It was dark when we arrived at Tours, and I was lucky in stumbling at once on so good an inn as the "Boule d'Or," the namesake of my Amboise hostelry.

CHAPTER X.

Tower of the Cathedral of Tours—Regulation for the Prevention of Suicide—Furniture of a Sacristan's House—A Fall from the Tower—Preparations for Suicide à la Française—View from the Tower—Position of Tours—Plessis les Tours—Interior of the Cathedral—Church of St. Martin—Its Former Celebrity—Its Chapter—And other Members—Its History—Tours in the present Day—Its former Population—Present appearance of the Town—Former Luxury of the Inhabitants—Guillaume le Breton's Description of the Town—The Bridge—The Rue Royale—“La Cité”—Mode of Building a Town in the Middle Ages—Quaint Names of Streets—Anecdotes concerning them—Residence of Tristan l'Ermite—Public Library—English at Tours—Departure for Saumur.

BEFORE breakfast the next morning I sought out the sacristan of the cathedral church of St. Gatien, and requested to be conducted to the summit of one of its two splendid towers. The sacristan himself was engaged in some of his multifarious duties in the church, but his wife, an old woman some sixty or seventy years of age, was ready to accompany me, provided I could find somebody to go with me, as it was forbidden to take up a single person. The same absurd regulation—as I cannot but consider it—is in force at Paris

with regard to the towers of Notre Dame. The object is to prevent people from making an improper use of the church tower, by turning it into a place of self-execution ; as if any man, totally unaware of any such a project, could prevent another from throwing himself over the parapet, if he was determined so to do.

However, the orders of the chapter were not to be disputed, and, as I knew no one in the city of Tours whom I could invite to go with me on such an expedition, I was about to turn away, and give the matter up. The old lady, however, had no intention of giving up so easily her prospective franc, so she begged me to wait a few minutes, while she endeavoured to find somebody to stand godfather to the propriety of my intentions on reaching the top of the tower. For this purpose she sallied forth into the street, leaving me at leisure to examine a very miscellaneous assortment of censers, huge wooden pyramids, painted to resemble wax candles, tall crosses, palls elegantly “ parsemé ” with large glistening tin tears, and various other ecclesiastical paraphernalia, which her mansion, situated close to the foot of the tower, and communicating with the church, contained. In a few minutes she returned with a poor, tottering,

decrepit old man, who I should have thought would have found it impossible to crawl to the top at all, and who could not have made the least resistance to my throwing him over, if I thought fit so to do, and much less could have prevented me from "doing what I would with my own."

However, he was sufficient to satisfy the letter of the law, and that was enough. So off I set with my old man and old woman, and finding, when once inside the door at the bottom, all the doors open, I went on to the top of the tower, leaving them to follow as they pleased. When at the top I heard the poor old man's cough rumbling among the sinuosities of the spiral staircase, and the stroke of his crutch on each stair, for some minutes before he emerged at the top of it, and sat himself down forthwith on the topmost step. He did not care to take a single look at all he had left below him, but sat there on the stair head till I was ready to go down again. For sheer pity I could not avoid paying him the same fee that I gave the old woman, though the understanding between us had been that she should provide a sponsor for me at her proper cost and charges.

She told me that this precautionary measure on the part of the chapter only dated from

three months since, and was adopted in consequence of an act, of which she had herself been witness. She then pointed out to me a certain spot from which a young man had thrown himself before her eyes. The poor old soul declared that she had never recovered the shock it gave her. She had not, until the present day, been up the tower herself since; and in truth she seemed quite overpowered at the sight of the spot, and the vivid remembrance of the scene which it recalled. He threw himself from that side of the tower which overlooks the nave of the church, and fell across one of the flying buttresses which adorn it. Notwithstanding the tremendous height, and the terrible nature of his fall, which almost severed him in two, as he was found lying, like a sack of corn, doubled over the ridge of the flying buttress, he lived for thirty hours after it.

The poor old woman said her first impulse, after seeing him take the leap, and hearing, as her straining eyes followed him in his fall, the dull dead sound which announced the arrival of the body at the bottom, was to rush to the other side, and scream to the people below. But she was unable to make them hear, or to draw any attention. A horrible fear of being there alone then came over her,

and she hurried down the broken stairs as fast as her old limbs would carry her, till, coming nearly to the level of the roof of the church, she began to hear the moans of the mutilated body, which she had taken for granted was ere this a corpse. She dashed on, heedless whether she fell or not, excited not so much, by her own account, by the necessity of obtaining succour, as by a sort of horrid, superstitious terror. She quite lost her presence of mind, and recollects nothing of how she got to the bottom, but that the awful dull moaning of the corpse, as she persisted in calling it, was incessantly ringing in her ears till she got into the air at the bottom of the tower-stair.

On mounting the same steps now for the first time since the event, she declared that she could not help fancying she still heard the same frightful sounds pursuing her steps.

She went on to tell me that the suicide was a young merchant's clerk, who had the *misfortune* to kill his dearest friend in a duel. So, being conscience-stricken, he fell into a profound melancholy, and feeling himself to be broken-hearted, he determined first to spend every sou he possessed, and as many more as he could contrive to obtain credit for, in a few months of riotous living and de-

bauchery of all sorts ; then to write, à la Parisienne, a letter to the newspaper, intimating his utter disgust of life and all in it, as also a detailed account of the philosophical train of reasoning by which he was led to the determination of quitting a world, “ qui ne m’a jamais compris,” to use the favourite phrase made and provided for such occasions by our philosophical and phrase-loving neighbours, and *then* to take a leap from the top of St. Gatien’s tower, and be the talk of all Tours for the next week.

The prospect from the summit of Tours cathedral is a wide and pleasing one, if not particularly beautiful. Though out of 334,910 hectares of land, of which the department of Indre-et-Loire consists, no less than 62,979 are moorlands, or heaths, yet Touraine has long been called the garden of France ; and Tours is situated in the midst of the richest and best cultivated part of it. Built on the flat, long strip of land between the Loire and the Cher, the former river washes its quays, and the latter is distant but a quarter of a league from its opposite extremity. The narrow tongue of land thus bounded by these two rivers, runs for about nine leagues below Tours, where the Cher at length falls into its mightier neighbour. Above the town the

two streams gradually recede to a greater distance from each other, till, at the eastern limit of the department, there is a space of from four to five leagues between them. Almost all this is fine rich land, which supplies amply to the markets of Tours all the necessaries and many of the luxuries of life.

The Loire itself, however, is the most attractive object in the panorama. For a considerable distance both above and below Tours its broad, placid bosom, studded with many a labouring barge, and a variety of smaller craft, is visible, and has here more of the appearance of the important stream it really is, than at any point of it I had yet seen.

Plessis les Tours, too, cannot fail to be looked on with interest, though but one single turret of the sombre residence of Louis XI. remains to mark the site. The other buildings which adjoin this are modern, and are used for the unpicturesque purposes of a shot manufactory.

As at Orleans, the finest part of the cathedral of Tours is the west front, and the two noble and highly-ornamented towers, the work of our Henry V. The interior of the church is fine, though smaller than many other cathedrals. It has the great advantage of perfect symmetry in every part, and in all the details

of the architecture. The nave is remarkably narrow for its height, which made me at first suppose the church much more than its real length, a hundred and five paces. The clerestory of the nave is extremely handsome, consisting of a range of double arches of the elegant "flamboyant" gothic of the fifteenth century. The choir has still preserved its brilliantly-painted windows, executed by Sarasin, a "verinier Tourangeau," who flourished in his native city in the sixteenth century. He must have been a worthy rival of the Beuselins, Pinaigriers, and Anquetils, who were the glory of their art in France at that period; but he is not noticed in the able book on the subject, by Langlois of Rouen. The windows which decorate the ends of the transepts and the western extremity of the nave are also still in existence. But a tremendous hail-storm, which visited Tours about the middle of the seventeenth century, destroyed those in the body of the church.

The popular creed at Tours respecting the foundation of their church, is that St. Lidoire erected it on the site of a house given him for the purpose by *Cornelius, the centurion!* Be this as it may, it is recorded to have been burnt in a general fire of the town in 560. The old Tourangean poet, Olivier Cherreau, however,

who wrote a poetical history of the Archbishops of Tours, records that

“ Le Temple de St. Gatien sentit aussi le feu,
Mais estant secouru, n'en brusla que bien peu.”

But it was again burnt in 1166, and the earliest portions of the present fabric must be dated from 1170.

The collegiate church of St. Gatien, however, was not originally the cathedral of the archbishops of this see. The church of St. Martin of Tours was one of the largest in Christendom, and, at one period of its existence, one of the richest. But with the exception of two towers, one called the Tour de St. Martin, and the other the Tour de Charlemagne, not a vestige of it remains. Of these towers one was at the west end, and the other at the point of intersection of the nave and transept, and they thus still serve to mark the extraordinary length of the church. The records and descriptions of it, which have come down to us, however, do not lead to the impression that its architectural beauties were as conspicuous as its size; and we are somewhat consoled for its destruction when we read that “ le chevet, ou rond point, était la seule qui méritât quelque attention. Le reste n'était qu'une vaste carrière, ou le goût

était aussi oublié que la matière y était prodiguée.”

What it wanted in beauty, however, it made up for in ecclesiastical importance, in wealth, and in dignity. St. Martin is recorded to have been bishop of Tours in the fourth century. And the reputation of his sanctity and veneration for his memory was such, that, in the centuries following that in which he lived, thousands of pilgrims flocked from all parts of Christendom to pray at his tomb; and subsequent authors speak of the pilgrimage to Tours on the same footing as of that to Jerusalem.

Hugues le Grand was the father of Hugues Capet, who, when he was placed on the throne of France, annexed the dignity of Abbot of St. Martin's to the crown, which style and title was borne among their various others by his descendants. And though Touraine remained many years subjected to its own hereditary princes, yet the Abbey of St. Martin owed no allegiance but to the King of France.

In like manner, Pope Urban II., in 1096, united to the holy see the title of Bishop of St. Martin; by virtue of which, the chapter in all its deeds entitled itself “au Saint siège apostolique sujette *sans moyen*.”

The chapter and other members of this

colossal church were on a scale of grandeur commensurate with the size of the fabric. There were twenty-eight honorary canons, fourteen clerical, and fourteen lay, of which the king was always one. There were next eleven dignitaries—"savoir, le doyen, le trésorier, le chantre, l'écolâtre, le sousdoyen, le cellarier, le grangier, le chambrier, l'aumônier, l'abbé de Cormery, et le prieur de Saint Côme. Next came fifteen prevosts; and then fifty-one prebendaries. Then there were the "sous-chantre," the "sous-pelletier," the "sous-écolâtre," the "sénéchal," and the chevecier. Next came fifty-six vicars, six almoners, three clerks of the alms, four wardens, four inceptors, two penitentiaries, two sacristains, one oblationer, and eighty chaplains; to which must be added ten choristers, one master of the chapel, one latin master, one organist, eight musicians endowed with demi-prebends, *one* "pauper of St. Martin on the foundation of Louis XI., four vergers, one master of the belfry, and thirty ringers, making a total of three hundred and seventeen persons, of whom two hundred and forty-six were in holy orders.

Few churches have fared worse than this huge cathedral, so long the admiration of all Christendom. It was burnt in 560, again in

801, again in 903, again in 994, again in 1096, and again, for the sixth time, in 1123. John Lackland once more set fire to it in 1203, and the Protestants finally pillaged it and laid it waste in 1562. It was left to the revolutionists of the last century to demolish the huge fabric entirely, with the exception of the two towers above mentioned.

Tours is at the present day a thriving city, and has all the appearance of being well-to-do in the world ; but old records of its population seem to show that in numbers at least it has greatly fallen off from its former importance. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the population is said to have been eighty thousand. In 1672 there were sixty thousand communicants, of whom thirty thousand were fit to bear arms. The consumption of oxen at this period was about ninety a week, very little more than one ox a week for a thousand mouths. It is difficult to conceive how eighty thousand persons could have been lodged in the town, which was then far smaller than at the present day, when the population amounts to but twenty-one thousand. But, at the period of its greatest population, forty thousand individuals, or half the entire number, were employed in the silk manufacture, now almost entirely lost to the town ; and we are told

that the greatest part of these lived densely crowded together in the garrets and cellars, where their looms were. What dreadful work must the epidemics so frequent in the middle ages have made among a people thus pent up in the confinement of a walled town!

Nothing can present a greater contrast to the picture thus set before us than the present appearance of the town. Its population has fallen to about a fourth part of what it was, while its extent has become nearly double. Yet it has no appearance of being a town overlarge for its population, or of falling into a state of decay. On the contrary, few French cities have so great an appearance of comfort, cleanliness, and general well-being. This is probably due in a great measure to the vast quantity of English, who have colonized Tours ever since the peace, in numbers quite sufficient to have exercised a sensible influence on the manners, habits, and ideas, of the inhabitants.

“La vie a Tours est bien douce,” as a Frenchman would express it, which means that, under a clear sky, and with well supplied markets, an unusually large proportion of the population have nothing to do but eat, drink, and sleep, all which may be done in perfection at Tours. I heard two men, whose

appearance gave ample testimony of their being competent judges of the subject, disputing, at the excellently-served table d'hôte, whether any Parisian luxury or dainty could be named which was not to be had in as high a state of perfection at Tours. The only doubt seemed to be about fish, of which, however, there were at the time three or four kinds upon the table.

In old times, the inhabitants were noted for their luxury, for an ancient writer, speaking of Chateaufort, as that part of the town was called which surrounded the abbey of St. Martin, and which formerly was not included within the walls of Tours, says—" Ils sont des gens riches, habillés de robes de pourpre doublées de fourrures, de vair et de petit-gris. Leurs meubles sont enrichis d'or et d'argent ; des tours s'élèvent du haut de leurs maisons ; leurs tables sont couvertes des mets les plus exquis. Ils passent leur temps à jouer aux dés et aux cartes. Ils sont affables aux étrangers, bienfaisants avec le malheur, libéraux envers les églises, charitables envers les pauvres, fermes dans leurs résolutions, et fidèles dans leurs promesses."

Guillaume le Breton, also, the worthy Homer of Philip Augustus, who commemorated the actions of that prince in verse far superior

to that of any of his contemporaries of the thirteenth century, writes of Tours in the third book of his *Philippide* as flatteringly.

“ *Inde iter accelerat Turonis festinus in urbem
 Quam geminum nitidâ flumen circumfluit undâ.
 Hinc Liger, inde Carus : medio sedet inter utrumque
 Clara situ, speciosa solo, jucunda fluentis,
 Fertilis arboribus, uberrima fruge, superba
 Cive, potens clero, populis numerosa, referta
 Divitiis, lucis et vitibus undique lucens ;
 Quam sacro-sancti præsentia corporis ornat
 Præsulis eximii Martini, gloria cujus
 Omnibus ecclesiis summum decus accumulavit.*”

Another writer, Paulin de Perigueux, who lived eight hundred years before Guillaume le Breton, speaks of the “ *Urbs Turonum, distenta agris, populisque referta.*”

At the present day, Tours especially prides itself on three possessions — its cathedral, its bridge, and, above all, its “ *Rue Royale.*” The bridge over the Loire, upon which the Rue Royale opens, is certainly a very fine one, and was considered the handsomest bridge in France before that of Bordeaux over the Garonne was built. It was begun in 1762, and completed in 1777. Four out of the fifteen arches were carried away by the flood at the breaking-up of the frost in 1789, and, having been replaced with wood, were not rebuilt till 1810. The entire length of the bridge of Tours is 434 mètres, while that of

Bordeaux is 487. But then the bridge over the Garonne rises considerably in the centre, whereas that over the Loire is perfectly horizontal. Perhaps there is no point from which the city shews itself to greater advantage than from the other end of the bridge.

The Tourangeaux have decidedly a good right to be proud of their Rue Royale. It is certainly by far the finest street I have seen in provincial France, and but very few of those of Paris can compete with it. It traverses the entire town in a right line, from the bridge to the gate opening on the road to Poitiers. It is broad, well-paved, composed almost entirely of good shops, hotels, coach-offices, &c., and — unheard-of luxury and splendour! — is bordered on either side by a good broad “trottoir.”

Most of the other parts of the town present a strong contrast to all this magnificence. An inextricable labyrinth of little winding streets, lying to the west of the Rue Royale, are really worth half an hour's wandering among them, as affording a curious specimen of the manner in which our ancestors set about building a town. One is tempted to adopt the ingenious theory of the erudite Diedrich Knickerbocker, respecting the original plan of New York, and attribute the cla-

borate intricacies of this mass of entwined lanes and alleys to the cows.

The fact is, that our forefathers, in building their towns as in all other matters, had more regard for individual rights, than for the public convenience. They built *houses*, and did not trouble their heads about *streets*. Each man constructed his own dwelling, and the general plan of the town was left to arrange itself as it best might. Hence the tortuous narrowness of streets, which were obliged to alter their course according to the position of each individual's property, and find their way from door to door, amid projecting corners, round sharp angles, and between encroaching walls ; and hence, also, the round-about winding course, still observable in old roads, which, at the expense of lengthening the traveller's journey, respectfully turned aside to make the circuit of each man's field, instead of private rights yielding to the public advantage, and advancing in a direct line through it.

The part of Tours which exhibits this style of building in the most striking degree is, as might be expected, the most ancient quarter of the town, and is still termed "la cité." Many of these lanes are so narrow as to admit no wheeled carriage whatsoever ; and

are, consequently, ordinarily silent to a degree, which seems strange in the heart of a large town. I was surprised, too, to find here and there, amid this mass of buildings, so strangely and irregularly jumbled together, several excellent houses hidden at the bottom of large courts, which opened upon streets not so broad as their own apartments. Several of the streets in this quarter of the town have quaint names redolent of the whimsical conceits of the middle ages, and, doubtless, intended to perpetuate the recollection of some memorable occurrence, which seemed, to the honest burghers of that day, worthy of being transmitted to posterity. Thus I noticed the "Rue des Belles Femmes;" the "Rue de Renard;" the "Rue de Petit Gars," and the "Rue de Trois Pucelles." Some of these, indeed, have not failed to perpetuate the souvenir entrusted to their keeping.

The Rue de Renard is said to have been named from the popular cry, "au Renard," which was wont to be raised by the populace in the sixteenth century, when any one suspected of heresy was to be hunted down. Many an unfortunate convert to the new doctrines fell a victim in the streets of Tours to the popular violence excited by this fatal

cry; and the Rue de Renard was doubtless the scene of some tragedy of this sort.

The Rue de Petit Gars, which is an old abbreviate of "Garçon," commemorates an absurd mistake made by the Cardinal de Lorraine, on the occasion of the entry of Francis II. into Tours, when the court were flying from the infection occasioned by the massacres at Amboise. A little boy, mounted on an ass, and dressed in masquerade, with a red figure of a bird on his head, was thought by the suspicious prelate to be a popular representation of the young king, ruled by the red-hatted cardinal; and the town authorities had much ado to persuade him that no such allusion was intended.

The "Rue de Trois Pucelles" has also its legend. It is given at length in a little volume on Touraine by M. de Croy; but it seems to me, I confess, to be very little to the purpose, as it is all about *one* Jewish damsel who had *three* lovers.

Although my notes on Tours have already run to a greater length than I had intended to allow to them, I must not omit to mention an interesting relic of the olden time, which would have escaped my notice but for the kindness of an English family, to whom I had a letter of introduction. This was nothing

less than the quondam residence of the never-to-be-forgotten Tristan l'Ermité. It is situated in one of the best streets of the ancient part of the town, and is, whether it were ever inhabited by so redoubtable an owner or not, an interesting specimen of a residence of the middle classes of that day. Popular tradition, however, which is not likely ever to have forgotten the dwelling of a functionary so obnoxious to the people's hate, and one to whom their attention was so frequently drawn, has ever pointed out this house as the odious hangman's den.

It is an ancient sombre-looking brick house, ornamented with stone corners and mouldings, and is now the dwelling of an honest tanner. These same stone mouldings are triumphantly pointed out by the popular antiquarians of Tours as confirmation "strong as holy writ" of the truth of their tradition. And most true it is, that throughout the building they do assume the form of a very accurately-carved cord, which, at certain turns and corners of the cornices, does twist itself into something marvellously resembling a halter. Nor is it at all otherwise than perfectly conformable to the spirit and manners of those times that the hangman's house should be adorned with such unmistakeable emblems of

his profession. Several of the rooms in the house are still in their ancient state ; and the same suspicious ornament is again to be seen in the interior of the mansion.

At the top of the building there is a sort of little observatory, or look-out, so raised as to overtop all the neighbouring houses. From this the chateau of Plessis les Tours is perfectly visible. And the tradition goes that this sort of watch-tower was constructed for the purpose of enabling the indefatigable Tristan to receive any orders, which might require prompt attention, transmitted to him by signals from the dwelling of his congenial-minded master.

There is a *public* library, consisting of thirty thousand volumes, at Tours ; and I have frequently heard the *advanced* state of the public mind in France attributed to the existence of such in most of the provincial towns. Now, as the old monastic authors of these thousands of volumes—the pillage of the monasteries, certainly—poor men, did not write with any intention of producing the total demoralization that is now uncivilizing the country, which, with fatal fatuity, proudly points to the spreading cancer as the proof of its progress, I think it but fair to their memory to let it be understood how much they

have, in Tours at least, had to do with it. Be it known then, that all the influence which these thirty thousand tomes have exercised on the public mind in Tours has been accomplished in the space of two hours per week, as they are most safely and innocently sleeping on their shelves, under lock and key, during the remainder of their lives.

Truly, these old chronielers beat the Hamiltonian and every other steam-power system hollow. "An accurate knowledge of Greek guaranteed in six weeks" is nothing to it! I made an application for permission to view these wonder-working folios, but was told that it could not be till the fated and fateful two hours should arrive in their regular hebdomadal course.

Notwithstanding this privation, which, by the by, is equally rigorous as regards the *public* collection of pictures, I should have well liked to remain a day or two longer at Tours, drinking the excellent coffee of the Boule d'Or, dining off the magnificent asparagus of Touraine, strolling about the cheerful and smiling, though unpicturesque, environs of the town, and amusing myself with watching the infinite and most evident distress of the numerous English loungers in the Rue Royale, at the slow progress of the hours

till dinner-time. Some had dogs to play with. Some bravely set out for a constitutional walk into the country ; some yawningly sauntered up and down the sunny side of the Rue Royale, or lounged into a circulating library, stored with such intellectual food as Messrs. Galignani and Baudry provide for expatriated Britons. But their grand resource was the arrival and departure of the diligences. One would think that they must have anticipated something more exciting than the arrival of a dozen " commis-voyageurs."

But all these allurements tempted me in vain. The allotted period of my stay in Tours had elapsed, and making, I flatter myself, no inconsiderable portion of that day's amusement to a listless group of my fellow-countrymen, I got into a diligence, at four o'clock one afternoon, bound for Saumur.

CHAPTER XI.

Journey from Tours to Saumur—"Les Levées de la Loire"—Importance of these Works—"Le Deluge de Saumur"—The Loire below Tours—River Scenery—Barges on the Loire—Habitations in the Rock—Luynes—"Pile de Cinq Mars"—Disputes as to its Origin—Langeais—Its Castle—"Seigneurs Engagistes"—Chateau de Rochecotte—Chateau d'Ussé—Chateau de Grillemont—Candes—Monsoreau—Touraine—Character of the Province—Frenchman's Idea of Beauty—Resemblance between Americans and Frenchmen—Arrival at Saumur.

THE road between Tours and Saumur runs along the top of the embankment, which extends, on the northern side of the river, the whole distance from Angers to Blois. On the southern side it continues for some distance above that. This immense work, called "les levées de la Loire," is destined to protect the valley from the disastrous effects of the floods to which the river is subject. These vast dikes are said to have existed in part since the ninth century, but were consolidated and much improved in the fourteenth, and were completed towards the end of the seventeenth. The side exposed to the stream is clothed with

a coat of masonry, and the other is planted with willows, poplars, &c. Since the completion of the work, in the seventeenth century, it has been found necessary to raise the embankment throughout nearly its whole length about three feet, to keep pace with the continually rising bed of the river. The dike is now about twenty-two French feet in height, from eighty to a hundred feet in width at the base, and from eighteen to thirty-six at the top. Its total length is about 74,000 mètres.

The immense importance of this great work, and the continual labour necessary to keep it in repair, may be easily conceived. The yearly produce of the valley protected by it is estimated at the average amount of 4,000,000 of francs. And although since 1711 no mischief has occurred, the state of the dikes is a constant subject of anxiety to the proprietors and farmers in the valley, and the period of the dissolution of the snows in the mountains, in which the river rises, is ever looked forward to with apprehension.

Three and twenty times, between 1496 and 1761, the dike yielded before the weight of waters, which, rushing into the lowlands, swept all before it, carrying ruin and destruction with it for many a league. The local

traditions of these disasters are not forgotten in the valley, and the various calamities which followed them are still often the subject of the winter evening's conversation in many a farmhouse, and the remembrance of them perpetuated from father to son. Even now, though it is more than a century and a quarter since the last disaster, the inhabitants often during the season of the floods leave their farmyards and fields en masse, and give their whole attention to strengthening and temporarily heightening the embankment.

The most calamitous of these overflowings of the river on record was that of 1615, which is still well remembered under the appellation of "le deluge de Saumur," that town having been the principal scene of its fury. Upon that occasion not only was the open country entirely laid waste, and live stock and crops destroyed to an immense amount, but the town itself suffered severely, the greater part of the streets having been under water for fifteen days.

The regular labours for the maintenance of the dike in good repair never cease, and are entrusted to "Cantonniers," who are distributed by brigades over the whole distance it embraces. The great road to Spain by Orleans, Tours, and Bordeaux, runs along a

portion of the northern embankment, and it was on the continuation of this line of road, which runs from Tours to Saumur, that I was now travelling.

Nothing can be better adapted to afford a complete view of the river than a road thus constructed; and, mounted on high in the "cabriolet" of a diligence, I enjoyed the drive extremely. It was a beautiful sunny afternoon; there was just wind enough from the west to fill the sails of the craft on the river, and bear them slowly though steadily onwards towards Orleans — the grand destination of most of the barges which navigate the Loire. Their various cargoes are thence forwarded without any land-carriage to Paris by the Orleans canal, which is decidedly the most important canal navigation in the kingdom.

Below Tours, the Loire very considerably improves in beauty. The banks are far more varied and more thickly studded with objects of interest and picturesque attraction; and the river itself has far more of the characteristics of a mighty stream. The long strips of low, flat, hideous sand, are exchanged for a succession of little islands, which, verdant, and in most instances covered with fine trees, though they detract from the grandeur of the river as such, yet compensate, in a great de-

gree, for this mischief, by being beautiful objects in themselves. The river, thus divided into two, or sometimes into three branches, assumes the appearance of a watery labyrinth of sylvan streams, meandering among green banks, whose overhanging trees throw a fitful and ever-changing shade across the sun-lit surface of the water. And nothing can be conceived prettier than the effect of a long line of barges, threading their way through such parts of the river.

The barges on the Loire have one rectangular, very tall, white sail, set square-wise on the mast, and reaching from the top to the bottom of it. They usually ascend the river in long lines of six or seven attached to each other; and the little fleet, thus seen across the trees of an island with the sun glancing on their dazzling sails, or emerging into the open stream and full sun-light from the shady gloom of some narrow strait, would make a leading feature in many an attractive landscape, which these banks of the Loire might furnish.

At some distance below Tours, the valley is bounded by an abrupt calcareous bank, in many parts of which, especially in the immediate vicinity of the little town of Luynes, a vast number of habitations are hollowed out

of the rock, one above another. They have a strange appearance ; but I could not see in them either the cleanliness or elegance (!) which the author of a little guide-book to the Loire speaks of. “ Ces petites habitations,” says the guide, “ creusées les unes au-dessus des autres, se présentent d’une manière tout-à-fait pittoresque, et sont en général, à l’intérieur d’une grande propreté et d’une *élégance* qu’on ne croirait pas devoir y trouver.”

Luynes was formerly called Maillé, or sometimes Roche-sur-Loire, till Louis XIII. erected it into a duchy in behalf of his favourite, Charles Albert de Luynes. Its large chateau still crowns the summit of the hill, in which so many of its inhabitants have excavated their houses.

A little beyond Luynes is Cinq Mars, with its extraordinary and unintelligible monument, “ La Pile de Cinq Mars.” This is a tower standing on the side of a hill close by the road, and sloping down towards the river. If the builders of it have failed in perpetuating any recollection which may have been entrusted to its keeping, they have at least succeeded in totally puzzling all the antiquaries. It is, at all events, however, easy to tell what it is, if it is somewhat difficult to tell how it came there.

This "Pile" then is a square brick tower, eighty-six French feet and a half high, and twelve feet and a half broad on each of its sides. It is perfectly solid, has not the smallest trace of door or window, and has been calculated to contain 118,000 bricks. It is surmounted by four little brick pinnacles, ten feet in height, and had formerly a fifth in the middle, which was thrown down by a tempest in 1751. The beds of mortar between the bricks are about an inch thick, and the bricks themselves are about fourteen inches long by nine broad, and two, or rather less, thick.

Such is the Pile de Cinq Mars. And now come the puzzling questions:—

When was it built there?

Who built it there?

Why did they build it there?

But, in order to give the reader a fairer chance of finding a satisfactory answer to these questions, he should understand that Cinq Mars, it should seem, is a corruption of "Saint Maars" itself, abbreviated from "Saint Medard." St. Gregory of Tours, in his life of Sainte Monégonde, tells us that it was then called Evena, and that the church was dedicated to St. Medard. But the earliest docu-

ment which makes the least mention of the "Pile," is an old title-deed of the date 1218, which speaks of the "Parochia Sancti Medardi de Pilâ."

Upon these somewhat slender data, and upon the evidence of the old tower itself, which seems obstinately bent on giving as little information respecting its birth and parentage as possible, speak all the antiquaries. One thinks it some old medieval baron's "folly." A large number fall back on that grand resource in all similar difficulties—the Romans. But these all differ as to the *why* the Romans built it. All these Romanists go sadly astray, deluding themselves with the corrupted name. Some say Cæsar built it to record five victories; some, that five heroes — *quinque Martes* — here lie buried; and some, that it was built in honour of Quintus Marcius Rex !! Caylus thinks that it was the work of the Saracens; and Chamel, that it was built by the Visigoths.

Some inquirer, more subtle than his brethren, has poked a hole in the side of it, to ascertain whether it really were solid. Another thinks it a light-house intended for vessels navigating the Loire; but is rather at a loss to say how the light was placed on the top of it. The peasants of the neighbourhood do not

attempt any explanation of the *when*, or the *who*, but content themselves with assuring you that its object was to mark the locality of a subterranean vault.

And now the reader knows about as much as any of them respecting the mysterious "Pile de Cinq Mars." As it seems to be "de rigueur" that every traveller should assign some new origin to this very provokingly inexplicable mass of bricks and mortar, I must confess that my own private opinion, in which I am confirmed by the manifold and excellent reasons given against all the above suppositions by every one of the learned gentlemen who have taken the matter in hand, except only the respective authors of them, and in which I am still further confident from the calcareous nature of the soil;—my own conclusion, I say, is, that it grew there. We know that soil of this description produces mortar. Then why not bricks and mortar?

There are also at Cinq Mars the ruins of a feudal castle, two large round towers, frowning over the valley, which seem to have been somewhat neglected by the antiquarians in favour of their more attractive neighbour—the mysterious Pile.

A little lower down the stream is the town of Langeais, a barbarous corruption of

its former high-sounding appellation — Alingavia.

How various are the paths which lead to fame! Langeais prides itself on having been the first place in Touraine at which St. Martin preached the gospel — and on its melons.

Here also there is an ancient chateau, built in the thirteenth century, and still remaining in a better state of preservation than most of its contemporaries. The sombre dark-coloured gateway, now used for a prison, looks as hale and strong and as ferocious as ever it did in its youth, when it had somewhat more ado to keep out the stout knights and men-at-arms of the olden time than it now has to keep in the wretched handful of their descendants incarcerated there. It was in one of the rooms of this castle that the marriage of Charles VIII. with Anne of Brittany, and the consequent union of that ancient sovereignty to the French crown, was concluded in 1491. The castle became the property of the crown in 1204, and was thenceforward held by a series of governors, whom the French historians sometimes term “seigneurs engagistes.” We find one of these, Guillaume de Roches, holding Langeais under Philip Augustus, on condition that he should keep and defend it

at his own cost, *unless* it should be attacked by the king of England in person.

A rapid succession of objects, each interesting for some reason or other, continues to amuse the traveller, and keep his attention awake all the way to Saumur. First, near the little village of St. Patrice, on a hill overlooking the river, is the chateau de Rochecotte, the birth-place and residence of the celebrated chief of the chouans of that name, who was condemned to be shot, and executed in 1798. It now belongs to the Duchess de Dino. Next comes, on the southern bank of the river, just opposite to a little hamlet called Trois-volets, the chateau d'Ussé, picturesquely visible on its wooded hill, among the fine plantations which surround it. This fine old house, now the property of M. le Marquis, Henri de la Rochejaquelin, was in part constructed on the plans of the celebrated Vauban. A little farther on, near Chapelle Blanche, a prettily-situated village on the road, is the ancient chateau de Grillemont, once in the possession of our friend, Tristan l'Ermite, and sometimes inhabited by Louis XI.

A little beyond this, near the limit of the department, there is a suspension-bridge recently built over the Loire; nearly opposite to it, on the southern bank of the river, the

contiguous villages of Candes and Montsoreau; at the first of which St. Martin died and was buried in the year 400, and at the second there are extensive remains of an old castle, now inhabited by a number of poor families. It was one of the former lords of this pile of building, a comte de Montsoreau, whose name is yet unenviably celebrated in Anjou, as the executor in that province of the massacre of the Protestants ordered by Charles IX.

The road here quits the department, and enters the ancient province of Anjou. For the limit of these *ci-devant* provinces was, on this side, nearly the same as that of the present departments of Indre-et-Loire and Maine-et-Loire.

Here then I bade adieu to the fertile fields of sunny Touraine, carrying away with me certainly a very different impression of the country from the preconceived notion of it, with which I had entered the province; herein affording, were it necessary, another proof of what different ideas the same words may convey to different persons. Touraine is a favourite province with Frenchmen. They invariably speak of it as an earthly paradise. You hear constantly of the "*campagnes délicieux*," the "*sites pittoresques*," the "*champs*

ravissants," the "ciel pur," the "coteaux boisés," and the "points de vue tout à fait romantiques" of "la belle Touraine." I had formed great expectations, therefore, of this land of promise, and had pictured to myself scenes combined of the green hills and sweet valleys of Devonshire, and the fresh streams and rich pastures of Normandy, heightened by the rays of a warmer sun, and enhanced by the beauties incidental to the course of a great river. I would warn then all others from falling into the same error. It is true, Touraine may be the garden of France, but it is altogether a kitchen-garden. There is unquestionably much to interest a traveller in many ways, and I am very far from regretting that portion of my tour which has made me acquainted with the province. But with a few exceptions—the valley of the Indre beneath Loches being one — Touraine is not a particularly picturesque district. For the most part flat, it is devoid of the first and most indispensable constituent of fine scenery.

But the fact is that a modern Frenchman's ideas of beauty are almost always the offspring of his utilitarianism. M. de Tocqueville, in the second part of his able and honest book on America, draws a singular, and, if rightly

understood, most instructive comparison between the Americans and the French of the present day. The points of resemblance are numerous and striking, and this might be added to the list of them. "Well! I guess this *is* a lovely clearing!" exclaimed an American, journeying over the Wiltshire downs. "It is just about the beautifullest prospect I ever see!" Now, Touraine does not in the least resemble Salisbury plain, and a Frenchman does not live under circumstances which lead him to consider a total absence of trees desirable. But the idea of beauty in the mind both of the American and the Frenchman is equally the immediate offspring of an idea of profit, or physical utility. I think that, in a Frenchman's estimate of the beauty of many other objects, the same idea will ordinarily be found to constitute a leading element. And hereby, perhaps, may "hang a longer tale" than could be fitly "unfolded" in this place.

Be this as it may, Touraine is certainly a fine country, and, if regarded only with an eye to what it will *bring*, may well be deemed beautiful, for few if any parts of France offer to the view a richer prospect of varied crops, of fruit and vegetables, corn and wine.

The daylight remained just long enough to see us out of the province ; and a fine moon was shining as, about two hours afterwards, we rattled over the long bridge, and down the street of Saumur.

CHAPTER XII.

Hotel de Londres—Revocation of the Edict of Nantes — Duplessis-Mornay—Fallen Fortunes of Saumur — Its Present State — The Chateau—Its Architecture—Views from the Terrace—View over the Loire—Dampierre—Margaret of Anjou—Mode of Cultivating the Vine—View over the Valley of the Thouet—Streets of Saumur—View of the Town from the Northern Bank of the River.—“Butte de Moulins”—Departure for Angers—Steamboat Stores, Literary and Culinary—Voyage to Angers.

THE next morning I observed that the inn I had been sleeping in styled itself the “Hotel de Londres.” It is an immense building, affording, I should think, about twenty times the accommodation which is ever likely to be wanted. Three persons only, besides myself, were inmates of the Hotel de Londres last night, and there must be at least from sixty to eighty beds, or, at all events, bedchambers. Things at the Hotel de Londres, I should think, must have been calculated on a scale adapted to the wants of the town before the revocation of the edict of Nantes had utterly destroyed its prosperity, and reduced its in-

habitants to less than half their previous number.

When a peace was negotiated between Henry III. and Henry of Navarre, the latter was put in possession of Saumur and its chateau as a security. Henry appointed the exemplary and admirable Duplessis-Mornay governor, and the town forthwith rapidly grew in population and prosperity. The Huguenots, knowing that it would be to them, under its new governor, what its name imports, a wall of safety—*salvus murus*—flocked thither in great numbers, bringing with them various industries and arts. Several manufactories of divers kinds were established; commerce, both internal and external, was carried on to a very considerable extent; an academy was founded; and wealth and improvement were rapidly increasing. The population of the town mounted up to 25,000 souls, and Saumur bid fair to rival some of the most important cities of the kingdom.

Suddenly as a thunderbolt came the revocation of the edict of Nantes; and all this prosperity, all these creations of industry, were swept away, as if pestilence had passed over the country. Never, indeed, did pestilence cause the havoc that this most insane measure produced in many of the towns of

France. The alarmed and indignant protestants fled in every direction, carrying with them their arts, activity, and enlightened industry. Switzerland, England, and the low countries, were enriched with the best artisans and most active workmen of France; and to the present day she has not recovered from the effects of the blow inflicted on her by their expatriation. The population of Saumur immediately sank to less than half. The academy languished, and came to an end; trade ceased; and the impoverished town has ever since vainly striven to regain its lost position and importance.

A street, bearing his name, perpetuates the sense which the Saumurois entertained of the benefits they owed to their enlightened governor, Duplessis Mornay; and the amount of its present population, which, with all the increase that must in natural course have accrued since that period, is only about 10,600, must still more forcibly remind them that Saumur neither is, nor, in all human probability, ever will be, what it was under his rule.

The town, however, still possessed a tribunal of commerce, and chamber of manufactures; and among its citizens, engaged in various industries carried on on a small scale,

has at least one class who do not regret the revocation of the edict of Nantes — a body, namely, of no less than 1,500 workmen employed in the manufacture of chaplets and rosaries.

The most remarkable object in the town is its royal castle, built on an eminence of considerable elevation, the extreme point of the ridge of high land which separates the valley of the Loire from that of the Thouet. This chateau is said to have been commenced in the ninth and finished in the thirteenth century. It is now occupied by a garrison, and is used as a magazine for arms and powder. All the arms used by the royal forces in the war in La Vendée are stored in the vaults hollowed in the rock beneath the foundations of the castle. The architecture of the building is unusually simple and unadorned ; and the naked strength of the walls is hardly broken by the plain mouldings of a few unfrequent windows.

It is not permitted to strangers to enter the chateau ; and the concierge, who accompanied me around the platform which forms the castle yard, assured me that the interior had nothing more interesting to shew than any ordinary barrack. The terrace, however, which bounds the platform, amply re-

pays the trouble of mounting to it. On one side it commands a magnificent view of the valley of the Loire, and on the other a less extensive but very pretty one of that of the Thouet. To the right of a person facing the Loire, the river, uniting itself into one stream at the point of the island immediately in front of the town, forms a fine open reach; and then, dividing again to encircle another long, green island, is seen winding away among well-wooded fields thickly studded with farm-houses, till it is lost in the distance amid a wide plain, whose hedge-rows and plantations are blended by the eye into the appearance of a vast forest. Close under the bank, on the southern side of the river in this direction, about a league from Saumur, is the little village of Dampierre, a spot peculiarly interesting to Englishmen, from having been the place where the heroic and unfortunate Margaret of Anjou died, in 1482. Her body was removed to Angers, where it was buried in the church of St. Maurice, under a tomb, which was destroyed in 1793. To the left, the view is less extensive. Immediately below the castle rock is the town, the island in front of it bearing one of its faubourgs, and the bridge uniting it with the southern bank.

The plain on the other side of the river, in

the immediate front of the castle, is peculiarly richly wooded, and has the appearance of a vast garden filled with thick shrubberies, and green sylvan labyrinths. The vine is here cultivated in the old classical mode, and trained from tree to tree, instead of the practice almost universally adopted in France of cutting it down within a foot or two of the ground. It is said that the latter plan is far the most beneficial to the quality of the fruit ; but the former has at least immeasurably the advantage in point of beauty. And this peculiarity contributes much towards producing the garden-like effect of the plain opposite to Saumur.

The view from the other side of this high platform is of a perfectly different character, though not less pleasing in its way. The little river Thouet, which passes close behind the town on its way to join the Loire a few miles lower down, is seen for a considerable distance winding its serpentine path through a bottom of flat meadows of wide extent, in proportion to the stream. It is one of those valleys whose well-defined, abrupt sides, and perfectly level beds, evidently indicate that at some former period the stream, which, now dwindled to a brook, meanders listlessly from side to side, once filled their whole ex-

tent with its waters. The pasture is invariably rich in such alluvial bottoms, and is, in all respects, admirably adapted for grazing meadows. In those occupying the vale of the Thouet, as far as the eye could reach over them from the eminence of the castle, there were, I should think, not less than from three to four hundred head of cattle.

The descent from the rock on which the chateau stands is accomplished by means of sundry steep and narrow but unusually clean streets. Perhaps they were, in some degree, indebted for this last quality to the rain, which had fallen in considerable quantities during the past night. The houses, however, for the most part, looked neat and clean. They are all built of stone, and that invariably contributes to produce such an effect. Among the names of these streets I observed that of the erudite Madame Dacier, who was an Angevine.

Saumur has little else to attract attention. Its town-hall, an old Gothic chateau, with turrets and pinnacles and ornamented mouldings, may deserve a visit; and a turn or two may be taken on its broad, cheerful quay, stretching from the bridge up the river the whole length of the town. Several towers and fragments of the old town-walls may, per-

haps, afford to the disciples of Prout subjects for their pencils. But a really good and sketchable view of the town and castle must be sought on the opposite bank of the river. The castle seen thence makes a very imposing object, and, though its outlines are, perhaps, somewhat too sharp and rectangular, yet, taken in conjunction with the other features of the scene, not an unpicturesque one. Behind the town is a high bluff, a continuation of the ridge, on which the castle stands, entirely covered with windmills. It is called the "butte de Moulins." A view of the town and castle might be so managed as either to include this "butte" or not, according to the taste of the artist; but if a tyro were anxious for some unmistakeable object to stamp the individuality and proclaim the likeness of his picture, there is the "butte de Moulins" at his service.

The boat which left Tours at eight o'clock on the day following that of my stay at Saumur reached the latter town about midday; and when, five minutes afterwards, it again resumed its progress towards Angers, I had joined myself to its motley cargo.

The stewards of these boats profess to minister to the wants of the mind, as well as to those of the body. And in the upper part

of the river a passenger might well be tempted to try their provisions of either description as a pastime ; though he would, probably, find nothing in the former department but two or three odd volumes of novels, the physical filth of whose pages could only be matched by the literary impurities of their contents ; and in the latter, little else than a round, dry morsel of impenetrable animal matter, which figures in the list of “ comestibles ” as “ biftec.” By the bye, what an insult alike to the British language and British appetite is this fruitless endeavour of “ la grande nation ” to call their miserable grease-sopped leather, beefsteaks. The French *are* a great nation ; but they must not aspire to breed, fatten, cook, or talk about beefsteaks.

On the present occasion, I was not tempted by any lack of occupation or amusement to put to the test either the literary or culinary stores of the Inexplosible. With every stage of the traveller’s progress westward the river improves exceedingly in interest and beauty ; and the voyage from Saumur to Angers is as delightful a one as a river, varied by an almost continual succession of islands, and passing between banks of considerable beauty, thickly studded with localities of various interest, can afford.

The day was radiant ; the river was laughing in the sun, and so were the merry folks on the deck of the little boat, and chattering like so many magpies. All looked gay ; and so, being very much in the humour for enjoyment, I betook myself to the unrestricted freedom of the plebeian fore-deck ; and having arranged myself a luxurious seat on a bale of raw hemp, with my back against the panels enclosing the cabin, I sat myself down to the three-fold enjoyment of basking in the sun, indulging in the flavour and fragrance of a capital cigar, and admiring each changing scene in the moving panorama before me.

CHAPTER XIII.

Voyage from Saumur to Angers—Tufeaux—Its Quarries—Angevine Costume—Trèves—Cmeault—Disadvantages of Steamboats—Gennes—Its Antiquities—Celtic—Roman—and Medieval—Traces of the Celtic Race in France—Superstitions attached to Oaks and Fountains in Anjou—Curious Practice—Beneficial effects of the Irruption of the Northmen into Europe—St. Maur—Benedictines—Their Settlement and Wealth in Anjou—Transcript of Books—Anecdote—Diploma of Clotaire I. respecting the Abbey of St. Maur—Recovery of this Document—Ponts-de-Cé—Battle between Louis XIII. and his Mother—Remarkable Epitaph—Country Houses on the Loire—Estimate of the Scenery of the Loire—Best Mode of performing the Voyage from Saumur to Angers.

A LEAGUE or two below Saumur, and after running by two long, narrow islands, the boat passes before the village of Tufeaux, on the southern bank, which takes its name from its vast tufa quarries. Immense stacks of the produce of these enormous caverns were ranged along the bank, ready for embarkation in the barges which carry it to Nantes, whence great quantities are sent to various destinations.

This is the first village where the round full-

plaited cap, which distinguishes the Angevine peasant from her neighbours of Touraine and Poitou, is observed.

Below Tufeaux there is a short but handsome reach of the river, free from all obstructions, which is terminated by two wooded strips of islands dividing the stream into three branches. To the left of these, on the southern bank, the noble battlemented tower of Trèves rises from the midst of embowering trees. It was built by Robert le Maçon, chancellor of France, in 1431, and is in an unusually good state of preservation.

A little further on is the village of Cuneault, also on the southern bank of the river. I should have liked much to have paused here awhile, for the purpose of examining the church, which is said to have been founded by "le bon roi Dagobert," who was not only king of France, but also count of Anjou in the seventh century. It is pretended, for the benefit of those who are not too particular as to the substantial quality of the food they give their voracious imaginations, that remnants of king Dagobert's building are to be seen in the church of Cuneault; but I have great fears for the authenticity of the legend. The present church, however, is said to be a very remarkable one. It is the work of the

eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, and is of most peculiar form. At the west front it is seventy-feet in breadth; and from this point to the east end it gradually diminishes, till, at the commencement of the circular termination, the building is sixty-one feet only across. "Les voûtes," says a little volume on the Loire, "sont aussi disposées de manière à favoriser cette perspective artificielle." But, unless it is meant that the height of the building is gradually lessened, as well as its other proportions, I do not understand what arrangement of roof this is intended to describe. I had no opportunity, however, of examining the matter for myself, for the boat sped past, and was bringing fresh objects of interest into view, and leaving king Dagobert and his church far behind.

If these boats would only just stop a few minutes wherever a sketcher wished to make a drawing, or an antiquarian to examine a time-hallowed edifice, or a geologist to knock about a tempting-looking cliff a little, or an idler to stroll awhile along one of the tributary streamlets which emerge from their green valleys into the river, they would not, it is true, arrive at their destination quite so promptly or so regularly, but they would be

far more delightful. As it is, their course is like that of time, which, despite the retrospective gazing of memory, hurries us irresistibly along the stream of life past many a green spot, from whose moments only half their pleasure and profit have been extracted. Only that, in the latter case, there is this additional inconvenience, that a "da capo" is altogether impracticable.

Long before I had ceased regretting the impossibility of tarrying awhile at Cuneault, the boat was emerging from among the islands into a fine open bit of the river, and Gennes, a charmingly-situated little chef-lieu de canton of 1600 inhabitants, occupied all my eyes, and drove Cuneault and its church out of my head.

Built at the mouth of a deliciously fresh-looking little valley, watered by a clear streamlet called the Avort, at the foot of two wood-covered hills, one of which is crowned with the lofty ruined church and steeple of St. Eusèbe, there is not a prettier spot on the river than this little town of Gennes. Coute qui coute, a true-bred antiquary must pass some hours at Gennes, even if to accomplish it he should be driven to throw himself with laudable desperation from the deck of the steamer into the Loire, and swim to shore.

For at Gennes, as I have remarked elsewhere respecting several spots in Brittany, the débris of three successive races, overlying one another as it were like the geological strata of alluvial formations, and attesting the passage of three populations of widely different habits and degrees of civilization, are to be found. The Celt, the Roman, and the Frank, have each in turn chosen this spot, so favourably marked for man's residence, as their abode, and each have left characteristic and unmistakeable traces of their sojourn.

As in the successive formations of the earth, also, the primitive granite is harder and more durable than the more recently accumulated materials of a subsequent period, so the monuments left on the soil by the earliest tide of human population, when retiring before the advancing wave which chased it, are still the most enduring and imperishable.

Several peulvans, or small menhirs, and a large dolmen, in the environs, called, in whimsical enough illustration of Horace's "nunc mihi nunc alio," "de la Madeleine," prove that this valley was once inhabited by the Druids. Throughout Anjou numerous vestiges of these ancient priests, whose every trace so vividly excites yet so little satisfies our curiosity and imagination, are found. In

fact, the whole tract of country, which would be inclosed by a line drawn from St. Malo by Chartres to Lyons, and from thence to Bordeaux, is more or less thickly strewn with them ; and physiologists assert that the Celtic type of the head, physiognomy, and general conformation, is yet clearly distinguishable as the predominant characteristic of those classes of the population within these limits, which are less liable to be affected by subsequent political changes in the destinies of the country.

Neither such physiological testimony, however, or the more palpable proofs afforded by the material monuments they have left, are the only evidences which remain of the habits, character, and temperament, of this primeval people. The minds of the peasantry throughout this district, as well as their bodies, still afford indications of the Celtic mould in which they were cast two thousand years ago. I have already in my former volumes sufficiently enlarged upon the extraordinary degree to which this is the case among the peasant population of Brittany. Nor are similar phenomena to be observed in any thing like the same measure in any other country. It is probable that Druidical practices and ideas were more forgotten and obliterated in every

other part of the country a thousand years ago, than they are in Brittany at the present day. Nevertheless, incorporated, and in a great degree assimilated, with the traditions and superstitions of a different period and origin, many remnants of Druidism may be found.

Sacred fountains and sacred oaks are yet revered under the thin disguise of "Notre Dame du Chêne," or "Notre Dame de la Fontaine." At Fontevrault, and at Ardilliers, such fountains may still be seen. And the oak of St. Laurent, near Chalennes, and that of Vion, called the Oak of La Jariage, are still believed by some of the peasantry to operate miraculous cures. Etienne Grudé wrote two poems on this oak in the sixteenth century, which are still extant. The second of them bears this superscription.

"Autre louange et requête faites par moi, Etienne Grudé, et présentées par Jean Grudé, mon fils, au voyage par lui fait le samedi 19 mai 1515. Et ce jour se trouva pélerins plus de quatre mille. Et il y en eut plusieurs amenez en charette et autrement, détenus de diverses maladies. Et plusieurs s'en retournèrent bien joyeux."

There exists also a little book printed at La Flèche, containing an account of the mi-

racles performed by this *Dryad*, intitled “Le Pelerin de Notre Dame du Chesne en Anjou.” There is also near Beaupreau a fountain, which gave its name to the Benedictine abbey of Belle-Fontaine, which, as Bodin, the historian of Anjou, remarks, “n’a encore rien perdu, ni de sa célébrité, ni de son efficacité, depuis que les Druides l’ont mise en vogue.”

Let us return, however, to Gennes, and descend a step in the chronological series of its antiquities. There can be little doubt that this now modest little town was, during the period of the Roman occupation of Gaul, a place of considerable importance. The traces of an amphitheatre, an aqueduct, and a Roman road, are sufficient proofs of this. The two churches, moreover, have the appearance of having been built on the foundations of pagan temples, and the head of an idol, “étrange de forme et de physionomie,” says the narrator, was some time since found there.

There exists here a curious practice, which would seem to be a remnant of the worship of Hercules, if, indeed, despite Roman names, it be not, as I should be inclined to think, the descendant of a superstition of older date in the country—itself, indeed, originally sprung from the eastern prototype common to both. This consists in the habit the mothers have

of presenting their new-born children to *St. Fort*, a saint in great reputation in this part of the country, for the purpose of rendering them strong.

And thus, the Romans, having seized upon the soil of the Celt, put *their* mark upon the land. But their star paled. And the mighty inrush of vigorous northern barbarism, giving fine promise of future civilization in healthy blood, a superior cerebral organization, and unworn-out nervous system, prepared the way for the new era of modern Europe.

A curious proof, by the bye, of the utter effete degeneracy of the latter Romans, and of the various races, who lived under the unhealthy shade of their rotten civilization, may be found in the exact proportion which the intellectual and moral standing and physical perfection of the modern nations of Europe bear to the entirety of their descent from those new stocks poured forth from that "great storehouse of nations"—the mighty north. There is surely reason to believe, that if France had been altogether peopled with a race of Frank, Norman, and Saxon origin, she would not have lagged so many years behind our own little island in civilization, or be now staggering onwards towards anarchy and social dissolution.

To finish, however, what I have to say of Gennes, from which I have, somehow or other, wandered away, it only remains to observe, that while Celtic and Roman antiquities vouch for its importance in its earlier days, the ruined church of St. Eusèbe, on its lofty hill, characteristically and picturesquely represents the ever interesting period of the middle ages.

Shortly losing sight of Gennes, and speeding along the stream, here unbroken, before the neat little stone-built town of Rosiers, on the northern bank; then, after coasting along another narrow island, passing the ruined tower on the hill-side, which gives its name to the village of Toureil, we soon came in sight of the buildings of St. Maur. The large remains of this celebrated convent have no picturesque beauty whatever; but I know not that I was more interested by the local associations of any spot I visited in the course of my journey.

Here, on these pleasant banks, laboured those learned Benedictines of the congregation of St. Maur, whose works form a standing apology for the institution and wealth of the monastic orders, and a refutation of some of the charges so indiscriminately urged against them! Hence came forth the Felibiens, the

D' Antines, the Mabillons, the Montfaucons, the Lobineaus, whose enormous erudition and most persevering toil have garnered up for us such mighty storehouses, filled with the rich sources of history. What historical work can be accomplished without a debt directly or indirectly incurred to some Benedictine labourer of the congregation of St. Maur !

The province of Anjou was the first in France in which the industrious disciples of St. Benôit were established ; and the Abbey of St. Maur was the earliest Benedictine convent on the northern side of the Alps. Anjou seems to have been peculiarly affectionated by the Benedictines ; for, within a short time after the establishment of St. Maur on the banks of the Loire, no less than five other wealthy Benedictine Abbeys were founded in different parts of the province — at St. Florent, Bourgueil, St. Aubin, St. Serge, and St. Nicolas, besides a considerable number of priories. The Angevine church generally was so wealthy as to draw from the old chronicler of Anjou, Bourdigné, the naïve observation that “ all the churches and ministers have such large revenues, and are so richly endowed, that, considering this, and the great rents and large emoluments, which the holders of these benefices receive from them, one

might be led to believe and say, that all the property and revenue of Anjou belonged to the churches and was in the hands of ecclesiastical persons, and that there were neither lands, houses, nor lordships, which were not the patrimony of mother church, and appropriated to her sons.' Among all these wealthy ecclesiastics, the Benedictines were far the richest body ; and it cannot be denied that they generally made the best use of their magnificent endowments.

At a period long previous to that during which a succession of deeply-learned and laborious men, principally belonging to the establishment of St. Maur, reflected such lasting glory on the Benedictine name, the monks of St. Benôit had the reputation of being a peculiarly learned and literate body. It was in their convents more especially, that the important and absolutely necessary labour of transcribing books was carried on at a period when this slow and painful process of multiplying copies of them by the patient hands thus truly labouring for the good of mankind was the sole means of preserving the faint spark of intellectual light which yet remained in western Europe.

The annals of the middle ages afford numerous extremely curious proofs of the scarceness

of books, notwithstanding the ceaseless labour of the transcribers, and the great care which was taken of them. An anecdote illustrative of their cost, in the fifteenth century, has been cited from the annals of the chapter of the cathedral at Orleans. The Angevine chronicles supply another, which proves their far greater variety in the eleventh.

Grécia, widow of Berlay the second, lord of Montreuil, and wife of Geoffroi Martel, sovereign Count of Anjou, was, for those times, a singularly well-instructed and deeply-learned princess. She was a great book-collector; and, if we may judge by the liberality she evinced in the gratification of her literary tastes in her own day, she would certainly have beat the most munificent of our Roxburghians out of the field had she had the good fortune to live in the nineteenth century. For a copy of the homilies of Haimon, bishop of Halberstadt, she is recorded to have given two hundred sheep, twelve measures of wheat, a similar quantity of rye, and as much millet; several marten skins, and eight mares of silver. In another place, we hear of a monastery having been built with the price of a famous missal, which a viscount of Thouars compelled the monks of St. Florent to give up to him in the year 1069.

The spot at which St. Maur, who was himself a disciple of St. Benôit, founded his monastery was previously named Glanfeuil, and it is so called in a very ancient diploma, of Clotaire I., of which a fragment has been preserved by D. Housseau, the Angevine historian. "Notum fieri volo," says Clotaire, "omnibus sanctæ Dei ecclesiæ fidelibus, tam præsentibus quam futuris accessisse me Andagavensem pagum in monasterio quod dicitur Glannafolium, in quo venerabilis Maurus, patris Benedicti discipulus, abbatis more videtur potius prodesse quam præesse," etc. etc. All that remained of the precious Cartulary, from which this was copied by D. Housseau, was recovered from the heirs of an aubergiste, who, chancing to be present when the Abbey was pillaged by the Calvinists, snatched it from a mass of other papers which were about to be burnt, saying that it would serve to light his pipe with. It unfortunately served him long for this purpose; and since the time of Housseau, the fragment which he thus recovered has disappeared.

Shortly after leaving St. Maur, we ran in among a whole cluster of islands, some of them larger than any I had yet seen in the Loire, which divide its waters into a multi-

tude of little rivers. Here, on the northern bank of the northernmost of the various streams of the river, is the little town of Ponts de Cé, which takes its name from a long series of very ancient bridges that cross the Loire in this place. "Divide et impera," thought, I suppose, the old architects, who chose this spot for bridging over the wide stream in detail. There are at this point no less than four separate streams, which are crossed by a series of 109 arches, some in wood and some in stone, forming together, with the intervals of road which traverse the islands between them, a distance of about three quarters of a league from one bank of the river to the other. Some antiquaries insist upon it that these bridges were built by Cæsar; and that Ponts de Cé is short for Ponts de Cæsar, despite of their having been named previously to the fifteenth century "Ponts de Sée," or, sometimes, "de Sez."

This little town is known in history as the scene of an important battle between Louis XIII. and Mary de Medicis, on the 8th of August, 1620, on which day that excellent son had the satisfaction of beating his venerable mother out of the field. A gentleman of the name of Nerestan, an officer in the king's army who was wounded in the battle, died a

day or two afterwards, and was buried in the church of La Baumette, with the following inscription on his tomb. It appears to me so far superior to the generality of sepulchral verses as to deserve to be recorded.

Ayant maintes fois dans les armes
 Vaincu les plus grands gendarmes
 Chargé de coups et de lauriers.
 Je meurs ; laissant les bords de Loire
 Temoins de mes acts guerriers ;
 Car je meurs après la victoire.

The banks of the river begin here to be studded with the country houses of the citizens of Angers, which continue in a tolerably unbroken series to the little village of La Pointe, so called from being the point formed by the junction of the Mayenne with the Loire. It is on this latter river that the city of Angers is built at about two leagues distant from the larger stream. This bit, therefore, of the Mayenne the boats have to run over twice in their trips up and down the Loire, for the sake of touching at Angers.

My voyage on the Loire, of this day, from Saumur to the mouth of the Mayenne, considerably raised the former river in my estimation. I had, I confess, begun to think that "La belle Loire" had been much over-praised by her admirers ; but he must be, indeed, a fastidious traveller, and one given to find all

barren from Dan to Beersheba, who can fail to be much pleased with this part of the voyage from Orleans to Nantes.

It might, however, certainly be performed in a more agreeable manner than on board a steamer, "Inexplosible" as those on the Loire may be. A small boat, with one rower, might without difficulty be obtained at Saumur, which, in two easy days, would convey the tourist and his effects to Angers. St. Mathurin would afford accommodation for the night, such as would perfectly content an old traveller; and, in this manner, lingering now on one side of the river, and now visiting the other; now halting on a green isle for a luncheon, providently brought with you in your boat, and now quitting your seat in it, to examine the objects of interest on the route, or stroll awhile along the banks, the little voyage might be made a truly delightful one.

CHAPTER XIV.

Approach to Angers—Position of the Town—The “Doutre”—Bank of Slate—Peculiar Appearance of the Town—Hotel de Faisan—Walk to the Cathedral—Its Position—French Improvements—and taste—West Front of the Cathedral—Date of the Building—Ancient Vestibule—Foulques de Mathefelon—His Character—Excommunications—Anecdote—A Miracle in the Fourteenth Century—A Bishop and his Chapter—Secrets of the Chapter House—Death of Foulques de Mathefelon—View from the Top of the Tower of the Cathedral.

THE approach to Angers is highly picturesque. The Mayenne below the town traverses a wide extent of flat meadows, which are inundated whenever the water is high, and then, forcing itself a passage through the scistous bank which separates its valley from that of the Loire, falls into it at the point to which the reader was conducted in the last chapter. From the spot at which the boat, passing between the dark-coloured cliffs that bound the river's passage through the high ground, and form, as it were, a gateway to the plain beyond, comes first in sight of the meadows with their numerous cattle, and the dark-looking town in the background, the

view is a remarkable, and far from unpleasing one.

Built on a steep eminence on the eastern bank of the Mayenne, the town has in the course of ages extended itself down the hillside to the river, has crossed it, and formed a considerable faubourg on the other side. This quarter, long since become an integral portion of the city, is termed the "Doutre," from a corruption of "De l'autre," the town, that is, "*on the other*" side of the river.

The Mayenne was anciently the frontier line of Brittany, and the stone, which was formerly the boundary mark, may yet be seen in the centre of the old bridge. Thus the Doutre, though an offspring, and, in fact, a suburb of Angers, frequently acknowledged other masters than those who ruled in Anjou, and its inhabitants are to this day familiarly termed "les Anglais" by their neighbours on the other side of the river.

The eminence on which Angers is built forms part of the long bank of slate which runs hence to the extremity of Finistere. I had before seen quarries of it worked near Chateaulin in that department, and here also the extraction and preparation of the slate form an important portion of the industry of Angers and its environs. The town is of

course in a great measure built of the materials so near at hand, and the consequence is that it presents a singularly sombre and gloomy appearance. When seen from a distance, as from the river at the point of which I have been speaking, this by no means injures the effect of the view. The contrast of the dark, grim-looking walls with the bright, sunny, smiling meadows beneath them, is striking and effective; and the huge black masses, whose time-stricken hues the youthful verdure of the valley "serves but to flout," seem to speak forcibly to the imagination of those dimly-perceived ages of high energy, strong faith, and great works, which the men of the present day have so frequently been led to deem dark, because, from the obscurity of distance and the hazy medium through which this generation regards them, they see them but darkly.

It was with my fancy thus excited, and prepared to enjoy exploring the sombre streets and old chronicles of the town, that, after having been much pleased with my short voyage up the Mayenne, I stepped on shore on the recently-built quay of the ancient city of the Angevines, and found my quarters at the "Hotel de l'aisan," which I can recommend to any persons who may think a profusely

and well-served table a sufficient compensation for bad sleeping accommodations, but not to others.

In the evening I walked up to the cathedral. This is built as usual on the highest point of the hill, and its tall spires are visible from many parts of the country around at a distance of eight or ten leagues.

The cathedral in a French city usually occupies the worst part of it. Forming almost always the nucleus of the original town, it is necessarily situated in the heart of the most ancient part of it; and the narrow, ill-arranged streets and crowded buildings which surround it are generally the parts of the town which would be last visited in the course of modern improvements and embellishments. A new bridge over the river, or a new quay on its banks—a new theatre, or new gilding to the heads of the iron rails in front of the prefecture—a new promenade for the citizens to walk on, or a new market for the more convenient purchase of their dinners, and a thousand other matters, would all come before any expense to be laid out on their old-fashioned cathedrals would be dreamed of. It is true that a great deal has recently been done, and is still in progress of execution, in maintaining and repairing several cathedrals. But

this has been done either by a government, who willingly expended the public money for the purpose of buying the support of the clergy, and the old-fashioned party still led by them, or by the contributions of the small, but generally wealthy, body of sincere Roman Catholics, whose munificent liberality for such purposes has in all ages deservedly been the pride and honour of their church.

But to the majority of Frenchmen—excepting always the peasants, who frequently have a great feeling of pride and reverence for their metropolitan church, and take much pleasure in visiting it whenever market-day, or any other occasion, brings them to the city—the cathedral offers neither pleasure nor profit. As a mere matter of taste, the churches of the middle ages are not objects of admiration to Frenchmen generally. They infinitely prefer the straight lines and plain *utility* of the modern style of building. Certain authors have, in imitation of English romantic writers, sought to excite interest by descriptions of these sombre piles, and the associations connected with them; but the national taste is decidedly opposed to them. The use of the term “gothique,” which in a Frenchman’s mouth compendiously expresses all that is ugly, worn-out, disagreeable, barbarous, and

inconvenient, is an illustration of the usual feeling for the style so denominated; and the vast edifices which preserve the most striking specimens of that style are not likely to be objects of his favour or attention.

Thus my walk to the cathedral led me through some of the worst streets of the town. Narrow, tortuous, steep lanes, in which the bare slate rock, rising above the thin covering of soil that elsewhere hides it, frequently supplies the place of paving, lead from the river to the top of the hill; and were it not that the lofty front of the church, rising above the mass of surrounding building, indicates that the route must be a continual ascent, it would not be quite easy to find the way.

The west front of the cathedral of St. Maurice at Angers is remarkable for the singularity of its proportions. The church possesses but one nave, without side aisles; and the two towers at the west end are therefore so close together that a very small space remains between them. The look of great narrowness in proportion to the height is further increased by a gallery connecting the two towers above the roof of the church, and filling up the space between them. The whole of the vast extent of front thus presented to the eye is singularly unadorned. One small, ugly-

shaped, and totally unornamented window, lights the west end of the one nave. The porch of the one door is ornamented with statues around the arch; and on the upper part of the wall over the window, in a row of eight niches, are eight colossal figures, popularly termed St. Maurice and his companions.

These constitute the entire ornament of the west front, which thus offers to the eye the appearance of a huge, narrow, lofty wall, totally devoid of the least pretension to beauty.

This front was surmounted by two handsome spires, which in some measure redeemed the ugliness of it. One only of these, however, is now in existence, the other having been taken down, and not yet, though it is about to be, replaced.

After the Norman invasions, which had been entirely fatal to the church of Angers, as to so many others, Hubert de Vendôme, bishop of Angers, undertook to rebuild the cathedral; and on the 16th of August, 1030, the nave being, though not finished, yet in such a state as to admit of divine service being celebrated in it, it was dedicated to the Virgin and St. Maurice. The building as it now exists, however, was not finished till 1240. The spires of that period were of wooden framework

only ; and it was not till 1518 that the chapter caused them to be replaced by stone, which was finished in 1523, at a cost of eighteen thousand livres.

There was formerly in front of this west façade a large vestibule, in which the catechumens and penitents who had been temporarily excommunicated were placed before they were readmitted into the church. This vestibule was built, in 1336, by Foulques de Mathefelon, bishop of Angers, and was destroyed in the year 1794.

This Foulques de Mathefelon makes a prominent figure in the long list of the bishops of Angers ; and the records of the see, during the period he presided over it, contain many curious anecdotes illustrative of the age in which he lived. He was consecrated bishop of Angers in 1323, and may be taken not as a specimen of the bishops of that period, because very many far better prelates might be cited, but yet as a characteristic sample of the manners of that day.

Foulques was a baron, the descendant of a long line of feudal ancestors, who like himself took their title of Mathefelon from a barony about four leagues from Angers. We hear of the barons of Mathefelon in the wars of the crusades, in the battle of Alençon, in which

the count of Anjou beat Henry I. of England in 1115, and in sundry other "passages of arms." We occasionally meet with them also commemorated as founders and benefactors in the archives of monasteries and churches. Foulques de Mathefelon, therefore, when he became a bishop, joined all the baronial pride, inherited from this long line of haughty feudal ancestors, to all the ecclesiastical pride which the episcopal dignity, in those days of priestly power, was calculated to produce in a vain man. And Foulques de Mathefelon became thus a very proud man indeed.

Thus we find him, on the day of his consecration, reviving the old practice, which had been long since abandoned by his more humble-minded predecessors, of being carried to his church on the shoulders of four barons, vassals of the cathedral.

He seems to have been in many respects anxious to do his duty in his diocese, but was determined to carry every thing with a high hand. We find him launching his excommunications right and left, without the smallest restraint, and with the utmost impartiality, on rich and poor, high and low, lay and churchmen; and fulminating them for every degree and species of crime and misdemeanour. The good bishop forgot that he was thus weaken-

ing his own power, and did not reflect that every punishment is less dreaded by mankind in proportion to the frequency of its infliction, and more especially those whose effect depends on the force of public opinion. Men will fear death less while they are in the habit of seeing numbers daily put to death around them ; but the good citizens of Angers began to fear excommunication scarcely at all, while they saw hundreds of their neighbours, clergy as well as lay, excommunicated every day.

Foulques de Mathefelon soon found this to be the case, for the simple-minded old Bourdigné, the chronicler of Anjou, relates the following history of one of the methods adopted by the bishop to sustain the failing terrors of his favourite mode of punishment.

Upon one occasion, the bishop had cited a certain Viscount de Beaumont, lord of la Flèche, to appear before his tribunal, for some cause which is not recorded. We may conclude, however, that the noble viscount was a somewhat unruly son of mother church from the manner in which he received the bishop's summons. Most unfortunately for the poor apparitor who served it, his lordship happened to be hunting when the messenger reached him. His dogs had just run down a stag when the summons was presented him ; so,

just to intimate his contempt for the episcopal authority, and warn others of the consequences of interrupting his sports, he bound the unoffending dependant to the stag's horns, and caused him to be devoured by his hounds. As soon as the bishop learned the fate of his unfortunate officer, he thundered forth his excommunications against the viscount, his friends and relations, domestics and vassals, connections and dependants of all sorts and degrees. For some time, this was followed by no effect whatever. Before long, however, several of the lord of Beaumont's dependants, either on the bed of sickness, or in some of the many occasions of life in which the most reckless men feel the want of those consolations which the ordinances of our Catholic church, even when debased by the errors of Romanism, can impart, began to wish for reconciliation with the bishop. More especially as their passions were in no way interested in the quarrel, they thought it hard that their eternal welfare should be hazarded by a crime with which they had nothing to do. And after some time they succeeded in inducing their lord to repair to Angers, and there to demand, somewhat sulkily and reluctantly, the prelate's pardon and absolution.

This the bishop made no difficulty of ac-

ording; for the false position in which the Romanist clergy were placed by their lofty pretensions to temporal power had, among many other pernicious effects, constantly that of causing the professed submission of the great to be but too gladly accepted by the church, as an adequate and sufficient atonement for every species of enormity.

Foulques de Mathefelon had brought the haughty and rebellious noble to kneel at his footstool and ask his pardon; the proud ecclesiastic had humbled the rival pride of the feudal potentate—and that was sufficient.

Nevertheless, as the penitent had despised his power, and appeared even now but little sensible of the seriousness of his position, and as, moreover, a vast concourse were assembled to witness the ceremony of the redoubtable viscount's readmission into the bosom of the church, the bishop judged this to be a fitting opportunity of exhibiting to his flock an illustration of the awful effects of excommunication. "Voulant bien," says the chronicle, "remonstrer au vicomte le dangereux estat auquel il estait et avoit esté depuis que la sentence d'excommunication avoit contre lui esté prononcée, devant tous les seigneurs tant d'eglise que de noblesse."

With this view, he took a loaf of white

bread, and, with all due formality and many curses, excommunicated it before the multitude. Whereupon, the white loaf became instantly as black as coal before their eyes. “Le pain qui par avant estait blanc devint noir comme charbon.” The miracle had a most powerful effect, and fully answered the purpose for which it had been performed. “Le vicomte et les assistans esmerveillez eurent très grande crainte, et en plus grande instance que devant demandèrent pardon et absolution pour le vicomte.”

The desired absolution was then formally pronounced, to the great joy and edification of the multitude. But the good bishop had as yet performed only half his miracle. He wished to shew them, that, if the anger of the church was dreadful, so was her mercy great, and that the same resistless power which could thus thrust a soul into black and outer darkness, could at will restore it to light and purity. But as this return to a state of innocence was not manifested, or, unfortunately, likely to be so in the viscount's proper person, the bishop had again recourse to the symbolical loaf. And, taking in his hand the bread, which had remained all this time under the curse as black as coal, he pronounced over it the same solemn absolution which he had just

accorded to the viscount, upon which it instantly returned to its original whiteness. "L'évesque," says the chronicle, whose words I quote, both to prove that I have in no wise exaggerated the marvels of Foulques de Mathefelon's miracle, as well as for their own quaint simplicity, "desirant de plus en plus les confirmer en foy, print de rechef le pain, qui noir estoit devenu, et lui donna absolution; et revint en sa première blancheur."

From some cause or other, which it is, of course, impossible to divine, the excellent bishop's miracle seems to have produced less effect on the clergy of his own chapter, than it did upon the laity. For in 1345 we find him excommunicating several of the canons for lying in bed in the morning, instead of coming to matins, with very little effect. Like the worthy parish officer, who, on being told by his neighbour that he was named for churchwarden, replied with much indignation, as conceiving himself called bad names, "You're another yourself!" So the canons retorted, not indeed by excommunicating the bishop himself, but all his servants. They published libels against him, walled up the entrance which led from his palais to the cathedral, beat his chaplains, broke into his

residence to insult him, and, in short, almost made Angers too hot to hold him.

One day, as a finishing stroke to all their other outrages, they determined to expel him publicly from the church. In order to do this in the presence of as great a number of the citizens as possible, they chose a day when there was a solemn service at the cathedral. In the midst of the celebration of it, they all, at a preconcerted signal, stopped short in the sacred ceremonies, and, forming themselves into a procession, absolutely drove the poor bishop out of the church. At first, as they began forcing him from his seat, he laid about him with anathemas and curses, that made the good citizens' blood run cold who were spectators of the scene. They produced, however, not the slightest effect on the uproarious canons; and as they hurried him along down the body of the church, the poor prelate, in the extremity of his distress, finding his maledictions useless, tried to move their hearts by a lavish distribution of benedictions. But the rebels heeded his blessings as little as his curses, and turned him from the door, "en dépit non seulement de ses anathêmes mais encore de ses benedictions," says the historian.

These disorders at length attracted the at-



Drawn and Etched by D. Herricu.

ECCLÉSIASTICAL DEVOTIONS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

tention of Pope Clement VI.'s legate; and the disclosures, which were brought to light by his investigation, and which have been preserved in the archives of the cathedral for the benefit and edification of posterity, shew that the bishop was not altogether free from fault in his dealings with his clergy. The legate *blames* him for having seized Robert Elie "chanoine scholastique," and doctor of both laws, and caused him to be flogged *while dressed in his sacerdotal vestments*, and within the precincts of the cathedral, for having then dragged him through the mud, imprisoned him, and, finally, extorted from him a large sum of money. He is reprimanded, also, for having suffered eight years to pass without having consecrated the sacred Chrism. He is accused of having imposed many subsidies on his clergy without the consent of the chapter; and, finally, of having received from the Abbot of Asnières a sum of money as the price of his impunity for a crime.

The canons whom the bishop had excommunicated are absolved by the legate; and it is to be presumed that the prelate and his chapter lived more peaceably together afterwards, for, when Foulques de Mathefelon died in 1355, the canons erected in the church a

handsome monument to his memory, with a long eulogistic epitaph on his virtues. This tomb, however, has proved a less enduring record of his virtues than the archives of the cathedral have of his faults, for it has long since disappeared from the church. He is recorded, however, to have exerted himself to the uttermost, and spared neither his labour nor his property, in assisting the people during the period of general distress occasioned by a great famine, which followed a pestilence that ravaged all Anjou in the year 1348.

So peace to the manes of Foulques de Mathefelon !

I had been so long in finding my way up to the cathedral, and had remained so long on the top of the one remaining tower of it, that it was rapidly becoming dark when I descended. Notwithstanding the eminence on which the cathedral stands, the view from the top is not nearly so extensive as the prospects which the towers of Chartres, Orleans, or Tours, command over the wide plains which are spread out beneath them. The undulating and broken nature of the country around Angers prevents the eye from ranging over any very distant horizon. The view, however, of the town, and the river, with its water-meads, is varied, and not uninteresting ; but

is less pleasing than it would otherwise be from the black, dingy, dirty tone imparted to it by the slaty nature of the soil, as well as the materials of the buildings. This appearance, too, is increased by the smoke, rising from the very considerable quantity of coals burnt in the town.

I entered the church before returning down the hill to my inn, but it was too dark to see any thing of it. So I was obliged to defer my farther investigations till the next morning.

CHAPTER XV.

Walk to Visit the Slate Quarries in the Neighbourhood of Angers — Refuse of the Manufactured Slates — Manner of Working the Pits — “Le Grand Carrean” — Descent into the Pit — Underground Works — Striking Scene — A Narrow Escape — Nature of the Rock — Produce of the Quarries — Return to Angers — French Want of Punctuality — A Test of Philosophy.

As soon as it was light the next morning I was on foot, and on my way to visit the slate-quarries in the neighbourhood of the town. These are situated principally in the communes of St. Barthélemy and Trelazé, to the east and south-east of the town. Some of the smaller pits are not much more than a mile from the city; and from thence I walked a distance of four or five miles, amid a vast number of quarries, and on a soil covered in almost every direction by immense mounds of the refuse slate. These vast accumulations, which are the result of the labour of many generations, are annually increasing, although some of the exhausted pits have been filled up with this refuse material. I

should have thought that these immense deposits of slate might, when reduced to powder, which could easily be done, be rendered useful as manure for any heavy, clayey soil, more especially as the Mayenne and Loire close at hand offer easy means of communication with any such.

The pits are sunk perpendicularly in the soil to the depth of one, two, or three hundred feet, and are entirely open to the sky. The slates are raised in the generality of them by a cylinder and rope, worked by a horse. But as this machinery is stationary on one spot at the brink of the pit, and the sort of barrow on which the slate is raised has to be conducted to all parts of the bottom of it—a space of considerable extent—this is accomplished by a quantity of ropes crossing the pit horizontally or obliquely in every direction, which are attached to different points of the main ropes that raise the slate, and thus guide them as they descend to the spot at which the workmen are employed.

The extent of my walk was to the largest and best pit in the neighbourhood of Angers. It is about four miles from the town, and is called “Le grand carreau.” It is at present three hundred and thirty French feet deep, and will be worked, the men told me, pro-

bably till it reached the depth of four hundred feet. From this pit the slate is raised by a steam-engine, which keeps in continual ascent and descent four trucks of slate, each a horse-load, which is received on a cart upon its arrival at the brink of the pit, and carried off to the ground, where the workmen split and shape the slates for use. This is performed in the open air, each workman sitting under the shelter of his own straw-stuffed hurdle, set up on end between him and the wind.

The whole of the works were carried on upon a very much smaller scale, and in a far ruder manner than those in the stupendous slate-quarries near Bangor, in North Wales. The slate, too, appeared to me to be of an inferior quality, and I saw none prepared so large as the three or four largest sizes there manufactured.

At the "grand carreau," about half way down the pit, a horizontal opening has been made in the side of it, which is closed with a little door in the face of the rock, to which a series of perpendicular ladders are attached to conduct to it. This little door, so oddly situated, excited my curiosity, and with much careful clinging and some little nervousness I made my way down the ladders to it. On lifting the latch and pushing it open, to my

great astonishment, being totally unprepared for any thing of the sort, I saw a huge, low-arched cavern, whose extent was dimly and uncertainly visible by a multitude of little lamps scattered over every part of it.

The dark nature of the slate rock in which the cavern was pierced, and its great size, made the limits of it, with the exception of the central part of the arched roof, undiscernible, and each dim lamp seemed only to illuminate the space within a small circle around it, forming a little oasis of light in the vast wilderness of darkness. The confused noise of a vast number of pickaxes clicking against the rock was echoing through the vault, and here and there I could discern a form by the light close to him, and now and then a halloo made itself heard above the din of the work.

The scene was so strange a one that I was glad I had braved the perils of the descent to it; and as the little door in the rock which gave admission to this subterranean world banged behind me, sending a gruff roar along the vaulted roof of the cavern, and shutting out the glimmer of daylight which it had before admitted, I might, had I been so poetically inclined, have fancied myself an unlicensed mortal intruder on the revels of a community

of gnomes. The lights did not, however, suddenly vanish, the sounds cease, and the huge cavern become as still and dark, as if the secret depths of earth were unpeopled by a race of spirits, and undisturbed by mortal adventurers. Nor was I knocked down by a tremendous rushing wind, which caused me to lose all consciousness, till I awoke as from a deep sleep on a sunny hill-side, and found two or three generations past and gone since I was last on the earth's surface. But, as I advanced warily and slowly into the darkness, I *was* somewhat startled to hear a gruff voice close to me, as it seemed, growl out, "Prenez garde de tomber ! sacre matin ! restez ou vous êtes ! Tenez ! Prenez ce lampe !" And then, and not before, I perceived that I was standing on the very edge of a hole sunk in the bottom of the cavern to the depth of about five feet, at the side of which, with his head just peering above the ground on which I was standing, was a man, with a little lamp in his hand, which he was offering me. His light had been totally hidden before by being placed in an excavation he was engaged in making ; and if his eyes, more accustomed to the darkness than mine, had not perceived me before I had taken another step in advance, I should have had a bad fall.

Armed, however, with the lamp, which my friend kindly lent me, I was able to explore the whole cavern, though not without much caution and very deliberate movements, for the light of the little lamp, absorbed as it seemed to be by the intensity of the surrounding darkness, did not enable me to see the ground on which I was about to tread for more than a yard or so around the spot where I was standing. Slowly and carefully, therefore, I travelled round the extent of the vault, which reached to a great depth from the door by which I had entered. At the farther end of it, it communicated with the upper air by means of a shaft, through which the slate was raised. But the workmen all reach it by the same route by which I had descended. The width of the excavation is also very considerable—I should think upwards of a hundred feet—and I was surprised that a slate rock should be of such consistency and solidity as to render an excavation in it of such extent, without masonry or prop of any kind to support the roof, either safe or practicable.

After finding my way back to my good-natured friend, and returning him his lamp, I groped my way as well as I could from him to the door, and opening it found myself again in the full blaze of daylight on the tiny

little landing-place, supported on irons driven into the face of the rock, on which the ladders descended. I had about a hundred and fifty or sixty feet of the sheer wall of rock beneath me, and about as much above me, which it was necessary to climb by means of the ladders fixed by cramps against the face of the rock. The sunlight, too, dazzled me on my exit from the utter darkness of the vault I had just left, so much as to make the task of ascending them more difficult than it would otherwise have been.

I reached the top, however, in perfect safety, though not a little tired of perpendicular climbing—a species of exercise by no means adapted for long continuance.

The total amount of the produce of the various quarries is estimated at the yearly average of 80,000,000 slates. They are said to employ upwards of 3000 workmen and 500 horses.

My visit to the slate-quarries had quite sufficiently prepared me to do justice to the ten o'clock breakfast, which I ought to have found ready at the "Faisan," on my return to Angers. Ten is invariably the nominal hour of breakfast at the hotels throughout all this part of the country, and five that of dinner. Punctuality, however, is very far from

being a French virtue ; and a traveller, who shall have incautiously given credence to the landlady's assurance that the breakfast would be put upon the table at ten o'clock "tout juste," and shall have set his appetite accordingly, will probably lose his time, and, perhaps, still worse, his temper also, by having to kick his heels in the *salle-à-manger* for half an hour, before the least symptom of breakfast is to be seen, or a single guest makes his appearance.

The same want of punctuality is equally observable in all other matters. No public conveyance ever by any chance arrives or departs at the hour fixed for that purpose. Even those which carry the mails are scarcely, if at all, better in this respect than the others. Yet nobody upon these occasions seems angry or inconvenienced, or inclined to remonstrate the least in the world ; nor do the functionaries, whose dilatoriness causes the delay, ever make the smallest attempt to accelerate their motions. And if any urgent occasion should ever oblige them to attempt an increase of despatch, the sole result is an increase of chattering and noise. I remember once seeing, and unfortunately making one of, a party of six travellers—it was at Moulins, in the Bourbonnais—who had assembled at three

o'clock in the morning, in the yard of a little public house, in order to take their places in a small voiture which was to depart thence at that time. There was not a possibility of entering the house, or of sitting down, unless it were in the carriage; and there did the whole six persons stand till five o'clock before the thing started, uncomplaining, and apparently very little caring about the matter!

Would that equal longanimity had been mine during the half hour that the false, fleeting, perjured landlady of the "Faisan" made me wait upon this occasion. But those who have never tried it know not how large a stock of philosophy it requires, when one has been up since five o'clock, and has walked a good twelve miles, to wait patiently for a ten o'clock breakfast.

CHAPTER XVI.

Interior of the Cathedral—Effect of Architecture—Provincial Antiquaries—Painted Glass—Appearance of the Town—Embellishments—The University—Its Origin—Situation of several of its “Inns”—Republic of Letters during the Middle Ages—Migration of Professors from Oxford to Angers—Academical Life in the Thirteenth Century—A Town and Gown Row in the Olden Time—Its Results—Oaths used by the Students of Angers in the Fifteenth Century—Punishment for using them—Manners of the Students at that Period—and in the Seventeenth Century—Anecdote—Fête Dieu at Angers—Gallantry of the Angevine Students, and the Heroic Devotion of the Angevines—The Bishop’s “Mauvement.”

As soon as breakfast, which at last made its appearance at half-past ten, was over, I once more plunged into the labyrinth of streets which constitute the interior of the town, and succeeded this time with less difficulty in finding the shortest way up to the cathedral.

On entering, I was struck by the exceedingly heavy style of the architecture. The one nave *is* low, and doubtless the disproportionate width of it adds to the effect produced by this; but the church is really worth visiting, if only as an example of the power of

architecture on the eye and imagination. Who is there that has not felt the effect on his spirits and thoughts produced by the heavenward spring of the light-soaring pillars and airy vaulting of a finely-built gothic nave! The arches of the wonderfully-poised roof seem to have dropped on the taper columns with the graceful lightness of a snow-flake on a flower, and to remain there less from any need of being themselves supported than to bind pillar to pillar in one symmetrical and perfect whole.

At the church of St. Maurice; at Angers, the opposite extreme to all this is exhibited in perfection. On entering the nave, one feels impelled to stoop, as a goose always does when it passes under an archway, be it as lofty as it may. The roof seems to press upon and confine one to the earth, and to require all the strength of the solid walls on which it rests to support it. The want, too, of side aisles, and the consequent absence of pillars from the nave, increase the heavy, prison-like effect of the architecture.

This was the impression St. Maurice's church made upon me. "Audi alteram partem," however. "Il y a sans doute," says M. Bodin, author of four very excellent volumes on Anjou, "beaucoup d'Eglises plus

grandes et plus belles que celle de St. Maurice, mais il y en a très-peu qui présentent un ensemble plus satisfaisant."

M. Bodin's book is one of the best provincial histories I have ever met with ; but the partiality of a mother for her first baby, which she not only maintains but truly believes to be the most beautiful specimen of humanity ever produced, is nothing in comparison with the blind admiration of a local antiquary for the buildings and beauties of his own pet province. I think one of the strongest instances of this overweening affection I ever met with, is M. Bodin's triumphantly claiming, as a singular beauty and perfection in his favourite cathedral, the absence of that beautiful series of flying buttresses, which form so splendid and graceful a feature in many a magnificent pile. " On doit remarquer," says he, with great complacency, " que ces voûtes n'ont pour appui que les murs ; il n'y a au dehors, malgré la grande largeur de la nef, aucun de ces arcs-boutans qu'on voit à presque toutes les anciennes églises, et qui ressemblent à des étais, qui soutiennent un bâtiment prêt a tomber en ruine."

The sole object worth seeing in the interior of Angers cathedral is the painted glass.

There is a good deal of very richly coloured, and belonging to the earliest period of the art. Early in the twelfth century, Hugh de Semblençay, one of the canons of the chapter, furnished all the windows of the nave but three with coloured glass. This beautiful mode of decoration was at that time still very rare. The Monk William, in his life of Suger, abbot of St. Denis, tells us that he had lately caused the church of St. Denis, and that of *Nôtre Dame de Paris*, to be adorned with painted glass. Thus the cathedral of Angers was one of the first churches where this splendid decoration, which continued throughout the best period of gothic architecture to be so indispensable and powerful an assistant to its finest effects, was seen. "quoique," adds M. Bodin, "l'origine de cette peinture remonte au sixième siècle;" an assertion which, I think, he would find it very difficult to support by any satisfactory evidence.

After quitting the cathedral, I spent the remainder of the hours till dinner-time in strolling through the town, which is far more extensive than it at first sight appears to be. This is owing to the uneven nature of the ground on which it is built, and to the closeness of the buildings in the interior of the town. A good deal has lately been done to-

wards embellishing it, according to the notions of the inhabitants.

“*Ses hautes et noires murailles sont presque toutes tombées,*” says the Vicomte Walsh, in his “*Lettres Vendéennes,*” which were written about seventeen years ago. “*La ville y perd beaucoup de sa noblesse ; mais elle y gagne en agrément. Aujourdui on n’hésite point entre ces deux choses là.*” The viscount, it seems, has formed a similar opinion of his countrymen’s taste to that which I have expressed in a former chapter.

I cannot, however, say much for the “*agrément*” which Angers has gained by its alterations. Though a picturesque town when seen from a distance, its internal appearance is singularly unpleasing. Coal-dust and smoke, slate-dust and slate walls, combine to give the town a dirty, cheerless look ; and the improvements have destroyed, as the Vicomte Walsh says, the feudal dignity and venerable time-stained antiquity of the place, and have substituted boulevards and promenades, new places and new streets, which have all the unfinished, naked, cold, untidy, brick-and-mortar-y appearance that so often characterises modern French embellishments.

Angers has, nevertheless, quite sufficient remains of the olden time yet left untouched

in its centre to occupy for a long day a student of medieval lore.

The city possessed, during the early part of the middle ages, one of the most celebrated universities of Europe, which ranks with those of Oxford, Pavia, Bologna, and Paris, as one also of the earliest. Like that of all its contemporaries, the origin of the university of Angers was its cathedral school established, and, in the first instance, taught by the bishop himself. The object of such schools was to secure a due supply of men qualified for the sacred ministry in the church to which they were attached, and its diocese; and their subsequent extension and celebrity depended on the talents of those teachers to whom the bishops delegated the office of instruction.

It is certain that such a school existed at Angers early in the eleventh century; for Hubert of Vendôme, who was appointed to the see in 1010, is recorded to have begged the celebrated Fulbert of Chartres, whom we have seen so busily engaged in the re-edification of his church, to send him one of his own disciples to superintend it. The establishment of "inns," or "halls," for the reception of scholars coming from a distance to study at the university, is very clearly recorded in the history of that of Angers. The

bishops and abbots of the neighbouring dioceses and abbeys established houses to which they might send their young ecclesiastics, where they would be able "vaquer a l'étude sans perdre l'esprit de leur état." These houses were termed the "hôtel," or, sometimes, the "priory" of the abbey to which they belonged; and the site of many of them may yet be ascertained.

Thus the Abbey of Fontevrault had one called Haute Mule in the Rue Saint Evroult. The priory de l' Eviere belonged to the Abbey of the Trinity of Vendôme. The Abbey of St. Florent had a house near the "Puits Rond," which was called the College de Ballée; the Abbey de Loroux had one in the Rue St. Denis; that of Pontron, in the Rue Saint Martin; that of Bellebranche, in the Rue du Godet. The sites of many more are still known; and the number of them, though not approaching to the three hundred which are said to have existed in Oxford, shew, nevertheless, that the university of Angers must have enjoyed a great reputation.

It was during the early period which followed the establishment of universities in many of the cities of Europe, that the learned men of its various nations could more justly than at any other time have been said to form a

republic of letters. The literature of every country was then one and the same. The intellectual possessions of the various nations of the European family, derived from the same fountain-head, had not yet been divided into those national streams, which, as they flowed on, found their way into such widely-separated and differently-characterised channels. No literature became national, until it became, in some degree, popular. And the learned professors of theology, and of civil and canon law, were, whatever land might have given them birth, all essentially Roman. The universal use of a common learned language also obviated any difficulty which might have arisen from difference of vernacular tongue, and enabled the professors of every country to lecture to the audiences of a foreign university as easily as to those of their own.

Thus the reputation of a learned man was more truly European throughout the period of the middle ages, and more especially during the middle centuries of them, than it can be said to be even in the present age of universal intercommunication and rapid interchange of thought. And we find the doctors and professors of the various universities continually passing from one to another of them, either at the express invitation of bishops, princes, or

bodies of scholars, or induced by any circumstances which might from time to time render one country a more favourable sphere for the exertion of their talents than another.

Thus we find a considerable body of learned civilians and canonists emigrating from Oxford to Angers about the year 1143. Stephen, having usurped the throne which belonged to Matilda, Countess of Anjou, forbade the teaching of either law, and commanded all the legal text-books, with the compilations of commentaries, to be destroyed. The professors, therefore, of these laws, being no longer able to exercise their profession at home, betook themselves almost universally to the metropolis of their legal sovereign. And it is, probably, to the impulse thus given that was due that celebrity for its teaching in these faculties more especially which Angers long afterwards enjoyed.

Another event, however, most curiously characteristic of the manners of the age, which occurred nearly a hundred years later, contributed much to the reputation and importance of the university of Angers. It is the English historian, Matthew Paris, to whom we are indebted for the particulars of the following scene, so graphically medieval.

It was Shrove Tuesday at Paris in the year 1229 ; and many of the students of the university, according to their wont upon that holiday, had gone out of the town in various directions to amuse themselves with jousting and such like sports. A considerable body of them had gone into the fields towards St. Marcel to enjoy their holiday in their ordinary amusements, and, after spending some time in such exercises, had gone into a wine-house to drink.

Hot and thirsty students, on a holiday evening, were not likely to spare the wine ; and it is possible the young clerks drank more than they were aware of. Be this as it may, when the time came for paying the reckoning, they strongly demurred at the amount. Uncivil things were said on both sides ; and as those were days when, in the words of another author, speaking of the same period, “ *malgré soi, il fallait être battant ou battu,*” from words the disputants soon came to blows. There always seems to have been, in every university, a strong feeling of party spirit and jealousy between the students and the citizens ; and the ancient town and gown schism, which, even in these peaceful days, occasionally sends forth a spark or

two from the ashes of the old fires, not yet utterly scattered from some of their former localities, was then raging with a violence which frequently led to very serious results.

On the present occasion, in this remote suburb — for such was then the now thickly populated faubourg St. Marcel — the gown got decidedly the worst of it. For the neighbours quickly ran in at the first noise of the quarrel to the assistance of the host, and soon succeeded in beating the students out of the field. It is not to be supposed, however, that the matter was likely to end there. Returning into the town in sorry plight, with their faces besmeared with blood, and their clothes torn from their backs, the discomfited scholars found ready sympathy and indignation for their wrongs among their fellow-students; and it was determined that on the following day, Ash Wednesday, signal vengeance should be inflicted on the St. Marcellites.

Accordingly, the following morning, a most formidable body of students, armed, many of them with swords, and the rest with clubs, marched out to St. Marcel. The bond of townmanship was in those days so strong, that a man's fellow-citizens were invariably held liable for his offences towards another community by the avengers of them; and the

sufferers themselves seem hardly to have rejected the responsibility, almost always in such cases making common cause with and supporting their townsman.

The angry clerks, therefore, did not trouble themselves to seek out the identical hostel where their companions had been maltreated, but entered the first wine-house they came to, turned all the spigots, stove in all the untapped barrels, and smashed every thing in the house to atoms. Then, sallying forth into the street of the village, they attacked all they met, men, women, and children, and beat them nearly to death, and returned to Paris, leaving the whole street strewn with its inhabitants half killed.

Hereupon, the prior of St. Marcel, whose vassals the maltreated town-folk were, made a complaint to the bishop of Paris, and to the pope's legate, and entreated that the perpetrators of this outrage should be punished. These prelates went immediately to the queen Regent, Blanche of Castille, mother of St. Louis, and demanded justice on the rioters. So the gentle Blanche quietly bade the provost of Paris go with his archers, and instantly put to death all the students who had been kicking up such a row.

The provost and his men were as impartial

in their retribution as the students had been in their vengeance. The manner in which, in both instances, *the body* to which the offender belonged was attacked, is highly characteristic of the period, and is a curious proof of the fellowship which united corporations and societies having been strong in proportion to the weakness of the ties of nationality. The indiscriminate attack of the students, and the similarly indiscriminate retaliation of the civil power, should not be regarded as a random stroke of blind vengeance, any more than are the acts of a war between two states, which has arisen from the acts of certain individuals. The two bodies considered themselves at war, and acted and suffered accordingly.

With this view of the case, the provost and his archers marched out against the enemy, and chanced to fall in with a large number of students, who were amusing themselves with jousting, and were totally unarmed. As it happened, they had none of them had any thing to do with the St. Marcel affair; but they were students—men belonging to the enemy, and that was enough. The provost's men fell on them and made short work with them, killing some, wounding others, and pillaging the bodies of all. Their victory was

the more easy, from the hapless troop of students having been not only unarmed but all of them quite young lads. Some few managed to escape and hide themselves among the vines.

This butchery was followed by fresh complaints to the legate, and the queen, and the bishop. The whole body of the university ceased its studies. The professors stopped their lectures, and went in a body to the queen to demand that the provost might be punished. This, however, was absolutely refused; and the consequence was, that the entire university unanimously quitted Paris. Professors and scholars alike betook themselves to other cities, and a great number came to Angers. There were many English at that time teaching at Paris, among whom Matthew Paris names Alan of Beccles, Nicholas of Farneham, John Bloud, Ralph of Maidstone, and William of Durham. There were many more; and almost all of them carried their talents and industry to Angers; and it was many a long day before the university of Paris recovered from the consequences of that Shrove Tuesday's row at St. Marceles.

In one of the streets in the interior of Angers is a spot, that, in the month of December, 1629, was the scene of a tragedy, which

proves that the discipline of the students was, to say the least, no better than it had been four hundred years before.

Indeed, for a long time back, the manners and habits of the students at Angers had been particularly irregular and scandalous. Upon one occasion, we find the academical superiors applying to Louis XI., then at Forges, near Chinon, to make use of his royal authority for the correction of the students' mode of life. The result was an ordonnance, which is interesting as describing many of the abuses it was intended to correct. The gross language of the scholars is complained of. They are said to be in the habit of swearing "*par le précieux sang ; la chair ; les yeux ; la tête ; le ventre ; les ossements de Jesus Christ, de la Vierge, et des Saints ;*" and of using "*autres exécrables, vilains, détestables, et inhumains serments.*" The punishment provided for using such oaths is to have the tongue pierced with a hot iron, and to be banished for ever from Angers. Louis says, moreover, in the preamble of his ordonnance, that he is assured that there are persons "*qui se disent écoliers, qui font plusieurs assemblées de jour et de nuit, portent épées et autres armes offensives, et tout armés s'en vont par les rues, battant ceux qu'ils rencontrent, bri-*

sent des portes des maisons, prennent et enlèvent les femmes contre leur volonté, et quand ils ont commis certains excès ils menacent tellement les personnes offensées de les tuer, brûler, et autres menaces, qu'elles n'osent aller se plaindre à la justice." For the amendment of all which he orders that any scholar, "de quelque état ou condition qu'il soit, s'il n'est noble, vivant noblement et suivant les armes," who should dare to carry arms by day or night, should be imprisoned for eight days and kept on bread and water, and then be whipped at all the crossways in the town, and be afterwards banished. Any who should be found armed in bands, are, for the first offence, to have their ears cut, and for the second, to be hung.

It does not seem that these severe regulations produced the effect desired; for, as the incident to which I have alluded sufficiently proves, nothing could be much more disorderly than the state of the university in 1629. It is related by Pocquet de Livonnière, a professor of the university at the time. The leading causes, he says, of the disorders of the scholars, are their carrying a sword, and frequenting the cabarets. There they drink to excess, and then come out into the streets ready to quarrel with the first comer. "Un

mot pris à travers, un coup de coude dans la presse, un salut que l'on n'a pas rendu par inadvertence, tout cela les irrite ; des paroles on en vient aux coups. Cette malheureuse épée, dont ils font leur ornement et leurs délices, devient l'instrument de leur fureur et de leur perte. Informations! décrets! condamnations! voilà cinq ou six familles désolées et peut-être ruinées pour la sottise d'un débauché. Ceci n'est pas une vaine speculation Chaque année fournit des exemples de pareils accidens plus ou moins graves." The worthy professor then goes on to relate that late one evening, as M. Licquet, a counsellor of the presidial court, was returning home quietly and soberly to his dwelling, he was met by a knot of young students, who were also finding their way home from the cabaret, not so unoffensively. M. Licquet was returning from supping with a friend ; he was accompanied by his wife, and preceded by a domestic carrying a light. They were immediately surrounded by the young men, who, with much gallantry, thought that it would be capital fun to insult the old magistrate and frighten his wife. The servant who was lighting them immediately stopped, on which the angry counsellor ordered him, with a sharp reprimand, to move on. Unfortunately, one of the

wine-heated youngsters fancied the words addressed to him, and without more ado, neither asking nor giving time for any explanation, he passed his sword through the unfortunate old man's body. He fell, and died a few hours afterwards.

The murderer himself fled, and escaped the pursuit of justice ; but the greater part of his comrades were arrested and thrown into prison. The case was tried at Paris, and three of the prisoners were hung as accomplices of the murder, and two others were banished, and sentenced to a fine of seventeen thousand francs.

An order was made also at the same time, that for the future no student in the university of Angers, whatever might be his rank, should carry a sword, under pain of corporal punishment.

A few years later, Claude de Rueil, then Bishop of Angers, had much trouble in correcting an abuse eminently characteristic of the seventeenth century, and of a less tragic description than the event just related.

The Fête-Dieu was at all times celebrated with peculiar pomp and festivity in the province of Anjou ; and if, in the seventeenth century, the spirit of devotion which was wont in old times to animate the assembled multi-

tude, was in some degree less earnest and sincere than formerly, the love of holiday pomp, of fêtes and processions, and quaint mummeries, was at least as prevalent as ever it had been. The Fête-Dieu, therefore, was looked forward to as a high holiday and occasion of great festivity by all Angers.

The bishop and all his clergy passed through the principal streets of the city in a grand procession, which was swelled by a large number of all ranks of the laity. The students of the university more especially claimed a place in it, and a large body of them, carrying a variety of musical instruments, always led the procession, and served as a band. Altars were erected in all the most conspicuous parts of the town, before which the cortège stopped while the ceremony of saluting the Saint Sacrement was performed; flowers were scattered in the path of the priests, the streets were adorned with tapestry and flags, and the whole city wore a gala appearance. Of course, upon such an occasion, not a window in Angers, at least in the line of the procession, was vacant. Flags, streamers, and bouquets, were not the most attractive ornaments displayed at them; and the young Angevine, who failed that day to secure a front place at one, would have deemed

herself indeed unfortunate, so anxious were the innocent creatures to obtain the benefit of some of the benedictions which the good bishop kept bountifully scattering on either side of his path !

The pious zeal, however, which impelled the Angevine belles to seek the front places at the windows, and to grace the occasion with their most becoming coiffures and smartest boddices, however creditable in itself, was not unattended with inconvenient consequences ; for the young students, who headed the procession, instead of endeavouring to merit the approbation of their fair fellow-citizens by a grave demeanour and decent attention to the ceremonies of the day, which would doubtless have been a far more likely means of obtaining their applause and regard, must needs stop before every window at which a particularly pretty face or well-known form was seen, and detain the whole cortège while they saluted the owner of it with a serenade. And so many pretty girls were there in Angers, that the poor bishop grievously complains that it was nightfall before he could get back to his cathedral to finish the day's ceremonies.

Year after year, this was the case, despite the remonstrances of the bishop and the dis-

truss it caused to the maidens who were the objects of this homage. For every year, their anxiety for the episcopal blessing overcame all other considerations ; and, as if to shew that they defied their personal feelings to interfere with their religious duties, the windows were more crowded than ever, and the weary bishop got home later and later on every successive anniversary of the Fête-Dieu.

At length, the scandal became too great to be any longer tolerated : and the bishop published a “ mandement,” in which he complains that the students interrupted the ceremonies of the day “ avec des airs profanes comme s’il avait été question de faire des sacrifices à Vénus.” He reminds them of the example of the children of Israel, who wished to please the daughters of Moab and of Madian, and who were to be hung on gibbets for their sin ; and, finally, he threatens to excommunicate any one who should, on the next Fête-Dieu, be guilty of “ this idolatry.”

I hope these scenes of French academical life in the olden time have not utterly worn out the reader’s patience. They interested me by bringing before me vividly the feelings, thoughts, habits, and actions of those who once thronged these old streets, so little changed, while their inhabitants have changed

so much ; and, though they have grown beneath the pen to a greater length than I had anticipated, yet I trust they will be acceptable to those who love to associate in their memory each new locality with such passages of its annals as are best calculated to illustrate the history of our civilization.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Chateau — Its Appearance — and Position — Its Historical Reminiscences — Departure from Angers — Rival Steam Companies — “Le Riverain” — Loire below the Mayenne — Islands — Their Produce — Normans in the Loire — Isle de St. Jean — Epitaph — Notre Dame de St. Behnard — Angevin Wines — Banks of the Loire in Anjou.

BEFORE leaving Angers the next morning, I had time to run down to the chateau, which I had not yet entered. Like the rest of the town, it makes a more imposing appearance from a distance than when examined on the spot. On approaching Angers by the river, its enormous black mass, situated on a rocky eminence at the foot of the hill on which the town is built, so as to be overlooked by the greatest part of it, adds to the dark and venerable appearance of the place. But, on a nearer examination, the visitor finds that he has already, while yet a mile or two from the city, seen all that the chateau has to shew. He may, indeed, walk around its exterior wall, and wonder at its vast extent, and at its

eighteen huge towers ; but, on reaching the one single entrance, which crosses the moat that divides artificially the castle rock from the hill on which the town stands, he will be told by the sentinel there on duty, that the chateau is now used as a magazine of arms, and that there is nothing to see in the interior. He may cross the drawbridge, however, if he chooses, and enter the grass-grown court of the castle, and convince himself that the soldier told him truly that there was nothing to see there.

The building, indeed, as it now stands, is remarkable only for the great extent of the outward wall and its construction. Built almost entirely of blocks of slate, it is impossible to conceive any thing more dark and dreary-looking, more utterly cheerless, more congenial with recollections of imprisonment and death, tales of subterranean dungeons, the scenes of fearful deeds, and every thing dark and dismal, than this huge, black mass of partly ruined wall.

As if, however, to render this "géant hideux et menaçant," as a French topographical writer calls it, still more grim and grisly, the whole surface of the building is ribboned over in all directions by a course of white stone, which mocks the dingy blackness of the rest

of the material, and renders hideous, as if with scars, the old veteran that, without them, would be, if gloomy and uninviting, at least venerable and decent.

Yet the black old pile is not without its reminiscences of historical importance and interest; and had I not already bestowed on Angers more than its due proportion of pages, and on the reader, I fear, what he will consider more than a due proportion of tediousness, I might pick from out its annals many an anecdote of Geoffroi le Bel, of Henry Plantaganet his son, our second monarch of the name and of the court he held there; of the Troubadour king René le bon; of the tyrant count, Charles, brother of good king Louis IX., and the haughty Dame Beatrice of Savoy, his spouse, whose sisters were queens of England and France, and whose proud ambition was the fatal cause of the too-celebrated Sicilian vespers, together with more than one tale of horror belonging to that veritably "dark age" of French history — the close of the eighteenth century.

Few of the little sovereignties, which, one after another, were, by various means, added to the French crown, and now constitute provinces of that wide kingdom, played so important a part in the great drama of European

politics during the middle ages as that of Anjou. Its history, during its independent existence, is frequently intimately connected with that of the leading nations of Europe. The three successive races of its princes have given kings to more important thrones than its own; and many a monarch has looked back from distant lands to these dark old walls as his home, and as the proudest possession of his ancestors, and, perhaps, still not the least valued of his own. England, France, Arragon, Naples, Hungary, and Jerusalem, have all drawn sovereigns from the princely house of Anjou.

But it is high time to bid adieu to Angers and its black streets, black walls, black castle, black quays, and black soil. A black-looking steamer, "Le Riverain," is hissing and sputtering alongside of the quay; the cathedral clock is striking seven; and the bell on the fore-deck of the boat is clanging and jangling its last angry summons to tardy passengers.

The citizens of Angers have two opportunities every day of descending the river to Nantes. The "Inexplosible" boats run up the Mayenne, and touch there on their way from Tours, arriving about the middle of the day, or somewhat later; and the "Riverains,"

the property of a rival company, which confines its operations to the river below Angers, start thence every morning at seven. These boats are larger, and of a different construction, as they have not the same difficulties of want of water to contend with as their more recently established rivals. It is to be presumed also, I suppose, from the title their opponents have chosen, that these boats are "explosible;" more especially as they are, I believe, worked by high-pressure engines.

It was about ten minutes past seven when "Le Riverain" threw off her moorings and began her voyage down the Mayenne. No sooner were we beyond the shadow of its walls, than Angers again assumed the picturesque and "historique" appearance which had struck me before I had made acquaintance with its interior; and I continued to look back upon it, and think, as the increasing foreground of river and flat cattle-sprinkled meadows separated me from it, what a charming landscape the scene might make, till the boat passed between the cliffs of the slate bank; and we soon afterwards emerged upon the yellow Loire.

The accession of the Mayenne seems to make a more sensible difference in the bulk and appearance of the Loire than any other

of the numerous streams which it receives in its long course from Orleans to Nantes. It is, below Angers, a very fine river, and the much greater variety of the country through which it passes, and its more picturesque nature, keep alive the attention during the whole voyage to Nantes. The stream, however, is as much encumbered with islands as ever, and many of them are of considerably larger size than those in the upper part of the river. Several of them are adorned with villages and churches, and the produce of their rich alluvial soil renders them important in an agricultural point of view. A considerable quantity of hemp and flax more especially is grown on them.

Ancient records prove that these isles were formerly covered with forest; and they then served as retreats for the northern pirates who so long ravaged the whole of the western coasts of France. They ascended the rivers, and many of them seem to have settled permanently on the islands, which offered them so convenient and secure an asylum. Thus we read of the Normans of the Meuse, the Normans of the Seine, and the Normans of the Loire. "Il y avait encore, de ces barbares," says old Mezeray, speaking of the tenth century, "en plusieurs endroits de la

France. particulièrement en Bretagne. au pays du Maine, en Anjou, et dans les îles de la rivière da Loire; mais avec le temps, et à l'exemple de Rollo, ils prirent des terres à habiter, et se naturalisèrent Français."

Nothing can be prettier of the kind than the cluster of islands immediately below the embouchure of the Mayenne, and the intricate labyrinth of streams which form them. The large island of St. Jean, just opposite to the mouth of the tributary stream, is one of the most considerable and most verdant. It has a little tiny church, whose velvet-turfed rarely-disturbed churchyard, says Bodin, proves that its inhabitants do not often die; but then, adds he, "l'on y meurt tout entier," if the following epitaph, which may be seen in the little cemetery, is to be trusted. For it assures us that "Ci gît le corps *et l'ame (!)* de Madeleine," etc., etc.

Next below St. Jean is the isle of Béhuard, which is so named from one Buhardus, its once possessor, who gave it to the monks of St. Nicholas in the year 1170. The church on the island, dedicated to Notre Dame de Behuard, is remarkably situated. In the midst of the flat rich soil, a sharp pyramidal schistous rock rises to the height of about thirty feet; and on the very pinnacle of this,

which is so pointed, that it is said to pierce the pavement of the church, and be visible to the height of four or five feet in the interior of the little building, is perched the shrine of our lady of the isle. Around the rock on which it is built are a number of stout iron rings, to which, during the floods of the river, are attached a little fleet of covered boats, each containing one of the families of the island.

As the boat threads its way among these and a number of other islands, continually succeeding each other, towards Chalonnès, the banks of the river are covered with the vineyards which produce the most esteemed wines of Anjou. On the southern shore, the growths of Rochefort and St. Aubin de Luigné are much esteemed, but have the reputation of being very heady. The Coulée de Serrant, on the northern bank, is a much finer, lighter, and more delicate-flavoured wine; but its fame is so high, and the vineyard which produces it so small, that it is very difficult to procure.

Every step of the banks of the Loire is, in this part of its course, storied ground; and each village and islet, each church and ruined vestige of former magnificence and power — and there are many such — has its own page of history, and its souvenirs of facts, interest-

ing in themselves, or curious as illustrative of past manners. But more than one volume might be amusingly filled with the motley details of all these various matters ; and, lo ! my own is already verging towards its close. And we have many a wide province to traverse yet, reader, before we part company.

I am all behindhand as it is ; and positively, reader dear, we must get on a little faster. Let us have a new chapter, and *determine* upon getting to Nantes by the end of it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Voyage from Angers to Nantes—Savonnières—Rocks of Rochefort—Coal-field on the Loire—Chalonnais—The Heresy of the Chalonnais—Montjean—Chantocé—Gilles de Laval—Blue Beard—His Chapel Establishment—His Crimes—and Punishment—Ingrande—Salt Smugglers—The Loire below Ingrande—Coal Mines—St. Florent—Passage of the Loire by the Vendéens—One Way of Writing History—Marillais—Ancient Festival—Speculation on the Origin of the Romish Festival on the 8th of September—Pilgrimages—Curious Letter of a Bishop in the Twelfth Century respecting them—Village Fêtes—Ancenis—Former Tide in the Loire—Joachim du Bellay—Specimen of his Sonnets—Tower of Oudon—Its Legend—Champtoceaux—Its History—Les Folies Siffait—Entrance into Brittany—Department de la Loire Inférieure—Character of the Angevine Scenery—Approach to Nantes.

ON the northern bank, opposite the island of Behuard, the boat passes the little village of Savonnières, whose church, says the historian of Anjou, which is in a perfect state of preservation, is certainly the oldest in the province, if not in all France. He considers it to be a building of the fourth century, but does not adduce any proof of a fact which it would require such undeniable evidence to substantiate.

On the southern bank of the river, a little

lower down than Savonnières, rise from the valley the three remarkable rocks of Rochefort. In the middle ages, situations so impregnable by nature as those afforded by these isolated and lofty rocks, were not likely to be neglected, and each of these was occupied by habitations. That to the east was crowned by a fortress, appropriately named Rochefort, and communicated by a bridge with the largest of the three elevated platforms, on which stood formerly a little town, called originally Diexail, and subsequently St. Symphorien. It was in early times inhabited by a predatory population, the pirates of the Loire, who were probably, says Bodin, a remnant of the Norman depredators, who settled themselves in this river. "C'était une place mémorable," says Mezeray, "qui fut ruinée durant les guerres des Anglais." The third rock had also a chateau on it. But of all these constructions nothing remains but two or three solitary fragments of wall.

The Loire here crosses the coal-field, which has been of late years so largely explored. The shafts of several mines are visible from the river; and the quantity of coal extracted has, for the last five or six years, largely increased with each succeeding year. It is said, however, to be of a very inferior descrip-

tion to either our northern or Somersetshire coal, and a considerable quantity is still imported to Nantes from England. There is also a good deal of marble on the southern bank of the river, in this neighbourhood, which is quarried in some places.

A little below Savonnières the boat passes opposite Chalennes, with its ruined castle on a rock washed by the river. Chalennes is a very ancient town, and should seem to have been, in the time of the Romans, a place of greater importance, under the name of Colonna, than it is at present. The Chalonnais have long been distinguished by the sobriquet of "NON-CROYANS," a nickname of terrible import once upon a time, but now, it is to be feared, so little distinguishing them from the rest of their neighbours as to be scarcely kept up. The inhabitants of this little town, however, according to the legend, rejecting one doctrine of Christianity only, received all the other points of faith with great docility. The story goes, that when St. Maurille first converted the people of Chalennes, or Colonna, and its neighbourhood to the Christian faith, and with his companions preached the new doctrines to them from a little tribune on the top of the church, the assembled multitude listened with the utmost attention and reve-

rence till the good man began to speak of the duty of paying tithe. Upon the first mention of this division of the subject, the whole assembly quietly and unanimously dispersed, and walked off, leaving the good monk to preach to the fields and trees. And this occurred upon every occasion that the monks so preached. Till at last, says the legend, the good fathers, perceiving that upon this sore subject they only wasted their eloquence, and that the pockets of the Chalonnais were impenetrable by any argument, were fain to baptize them, and admit them to the church, without insisting any farther upon the doctrine to which they had such a "conscientious objection;" only punishing them for their contumacy by inflicting on them the epithet of "Non-Croyans." Certain it is, at all events, that the Chalonnais, up to the middle of the seventeenth century, enjoyed an exemption from tithe, and the sobriquet which declared the cause of such a privilege.

A little below Chalonnnes is Montjean, a very prominent object, which is seen for a considerable distance on the river, both above and below. Its conical ruin-covered hill, once in all probability surmounted by a temple of Janus, whence comes its name, is now distin-

guished by the remains of a convent of Cordeliers.

Opposite Montjean, on the northern bank, are the ruins of the chateau of Chantocé, famous, or infamous rather, as the residence of one of the most execrable monsters who ever disgraced humanity, and the scene of his atrocities. This was no other than Gilles de Laval, Marechal de Retz, whose revolting abominations, having been mixed up by the shuddering peasants with supernatural horrors, have obtained for him, under the nickname of Blue Beard, an universal notoriety of a lighter kind than the reality of his crimes deserved.

Gilles de Laval, lord of Retz, of Briolay, of Chantocé, of Ingrandes, of Loroux-Bottereau, of Blaison, of Chemellier, of Gratecuisse, of Fontaine-Milon, in Anjou, and of many other baronies and lordships in Brittany and other parts of the kingdom, was one of the richest men of his day in the time of Charles VII. He became master of all this enormous property at the age of twenty, and, by the most prodigal and absurd extravagance, dissipated nearly the whole of it.

Among other traits of his profuse expenditure, the establishment of his chapel has been

recorded. It was composed of a "bishop," as he insisted upon calling his principal chaplain, a dean, a chanter, two archdeacons, four vicars, a schoolmaster, twelve chaplains, and eight choristers. All these followed in his suite wherever he travelled. Each one of them had his horse and his servant; they were all dressed in robes of scarlet and furs, and had rich appointments. Chandeliers, censers, crosses, sacred vessels in great quantity, and all of gold and silver, were transported with them, together, says the historian, with many organs, each carried by six men. He was exceedingly anxious that all the priests of his chapel should be entitled to wear the mitre, and he sent many embassies to Rome to obtain this privilege, but without success.

These were the follies of his youth; and it would have been well if he had left behind him only the remembrance of similar absurdities. But these and many other equally ridiculous extravagances soon began to make serious inroads into his property, enormous as it was. He was obliged first to borrow money, and soon afterwards to sell some of his baronies. Year after year we find the records of new sales of baronies and lordships, which seem inexhaustible. And the incalcu-

lably rich Gilles de Laval became a distressed man.

But adversity, though a wholesome, is a strong medicine, and is profitable to strong, well-constituted minds only. It cures the excesses and purifies the heart of a fine character, but hurries on the radically vicious and the weak in the down-hill path to destruction.

And Gilles de Laval, foolish, extravagant, debauched, and unprincipled in prosperity, became a monster in adversity. He took into his pay a certain physician of Poitou, and a Florentine, named Prelati, who pretended to be in communication with the devil, and to be able to recruit his exhausted treasures by supernatural means. These scoundrels found means to make him believe that the devil appeared to him, and persuaded him to sign an agreement with his Satanic majesty in due form. We have some characteristic notices of the precautions this foolish sinner so vainly took to preserve himself from the devil. He would sometimes be reciting a prayer to the Virgin during the whole interview; at others, he consoled himself with having the secret intention of expiating all by eventually going to the holy land. He made a point of speaking to and of the devils as "vilains," believing

that as such they would not have power over so puissant a noble ; and, moreover, he always took care to have his sword in his hand, of which he was a great master.

Raising the devil may, in the nineteenth century, be laughed at as a harmless absurdity, involving no very heinous degree of criminality. But that is very far from harmless which renders a man criminal in his own eyes. Gilles de Laval conceived himself to have committed the blackest sin of which man could be guilty, and the real moral degradation which ensued from it was proportioned to his own estimate of the offence. No crime was henceforward monstrous enough to make him hesitate in his course, and the recorded series of his atrocities is probably unequalled in the annals of human depravity.

With a revolting, vampire-like selfishness, more detestable than any ordinary object of murder, he caused the handsomest and finest children of either sex throughout his domains to be seized and put to death within these walls of Chantocé, in order to form a bath of their blood, in the belief that it would preserve his own loathsome life and vigour. In vain through the wide extent of his lands and villages rose one universal voice of lament and execration from the wretched peasantry obliged

to furnish this fearful tribute, which realized the most horrible fictions of pagan antiquity. Already more than a hundred victims had perished, and the feeble, ill-organized justice of the period was paralysed by the rank, the power, and vast possessions of the monster.

At last, however, the universal voice of the country became too loud to be disregarded; and little as the men of that day were accustomed to be shocked by ordinary crimes of violence and blood, the wretch's life became too revolting to be tolerated by them; and had not the constituted authorities at length interfered, he would have been exterminated as a noxious reptile by the tardily-excited violence of popular indignation. He was seized by the orders of the Bishop of Nantes and the Seneschal of Rennes; and after a trial, during which revelations of wickedness and barbarity, almost incredible, continued through many years, were substantiated against him, he was condemned to be burned alive in the meadows before Nantes. And this sentence was executed there on the 23rd of December, in the year 1440. The culprit is recorded to have presented himself before the tribunal with the utmost haughtiness and disdain, and replied to their interrogatories

that he had committed crimes enough to condemn to death ten thousand men.

So lived and died Gilles de Laval, the veritable original of the redoubtable bloody Blue Beard; and the ugly ruins of his blood-defiled castle of Chantocé seem to remain yet standing solely to perpetuate the memory of his infamy and ignominious name.

A very little below Chantocé, and facing the first open reach of the river which occurs below Angers, is the small town of Ingrande, which would be hardly worth mentioning were it not for the sake of noticing the curious corruption its name has undergone. It is situated on the frontier of Brittany and Anjou, and was anciently named "Ingressus Andium," the entrance to the country of the Andes, as the Angevines were formerly called, and hence, in the process of time and barbarous pronunciation, Ingrande. When Brittany was united to the French crown by the marriage of its duchess, Anne, she secured for her native dominions, among several other privileges, an immunity from the very onerous salt "gabelle," which was so grievously felt by the other provinces of France. Now, it happened that the frontier line ran down the middle of a street in the heart of the town of Ingrande, so that those who were so fortunate

as to inhabit houses on the western side of the street paid only two liards, or about a farthing a pound for their salt, while their Angevine neighbours on the opposite side of the way were giving for their's fourteen sous, (seven pence), a pound. It may easily be supposed that the douaniers had no sinecure in preventing smuggling from one side of the street to the other, under such circumstances; and it said that most of the salt used in the eastern half of Ingrande found its way across the frontier by being dexterously flung out of the Breton into the Angevine bedroom windows.

The northern bank of the river below Ingrande is now the department of La Loire Inferieure, formerly part of the province of Brittany. The southern shore continues to form part of Anjou, now Maine, or, more properly, Mayenne et Loire, for some distance lower down.

The views on the river are here remarkably beautiful, especially down the stream towards St. Florent. Its lofty steeple closes a varied landscape, which, with the motley craft on the river—long, low barges, with their tall white sail, or with two or three picturesque figures pushing them with long poles laboriously up against the current, punts laden with agricul-

tural produce, and small boats conveying, perhaps, a peasant girl or two, with vigorous, well-pulled oars across the stream, on the various occasions of their rustic labour—would make a picture well worthy of a master's hand. In this neighbourhood are some of the most ancient and deepest of the coal-pits on the Loire. The oldest of them are more than 1200 feet deep, and have been worked since 1765. They extend under the bed of the river, and the coal frequently exhibits very distinct impressions of the bark and leaves of the palm.

As the boat leaves this short but magnificent reach of the river, and once more enters the narrower channel left it by a new succession of islands, the ruins first of the ancient Benedictine abbey, and in a few minutes afterwards the little town of St. Florent, come in sight. This is a spot interesting on many accounts, and associated with the memory of deeds which many a generation yet to come will tell of in a different spirit from that in which they are related by the majority of French writers on the subject at the present day.

One of the six wealthy Benedictine abbeys which Anjou formerly possessed was situated on the conical hill which rises from the midst

of the town, and was sometimes called, from the older name of the mount, the abbey of Mont Glonne. The church is as usual situated on the highest point of the hill, and the ruins of the monastery are still scattered amid the town on the sides of it. They have in themselves no beauty. Still bearing evident traces of having owed their untimely destruction to the hand of man, rather than to the gentle, and, even when destroying, hallowing touch of time, they suggest painful images of barbarian ravage and brutal violence, instead of "sweet, solemn thoughts of death and of decay." The convent was burned, as the guide-books and local historians say, "dans les guerres de la Vendée." It is certainly unnecessary to say by which party the Vandalism was committed.

But the most memorable day in the history of St. Florent will for ever be that of the passage of the Loire by the Vendéens, in 1794, when pursued by the republican army. It is needless to attempt any description of that dreadful event after the graphic and admirably-told story of the scene to be found in the too deeply interesting memoirs of Madame de la Rochejacquelein. Most appropriately might Virgil's "*quæque ipsa miserrima vidi, et quorum pars magna fui!*" have been pre-

fixed as a motto to her book. And it has all the vivid characteristics of evident truth and accuracy which an eye-witness can alone give to the description of such a scene. St. Florent ought not to be visited without Madame de la Rochejacquelein's pages in one's hand; but the book is so common a one, and the English translation of it has made it so well known in this country, that it is not worth while to transcribe here so long a passage.

Yes! here, in front of St. Florent, in sight of the very spot where, a year before, four thousand of their republican persecutors had been spared and freely liberated, when prisoners and in their power, by these same Vendéans, at the request of their dying general, the noble-hearted Bouchamps, were the hapless peasants, men, women, and children, pursued into the river by their ruthless enemies, in whose breasts the generosity of their opponents could awaken no corresponding sentiment, and whom mercy could not teach to be merciful.

It is curious to see how the "liberal" historian of Anjou, M. Bodin, too conscientious to misrepresent the facts, too clear-sighted not to be thoroughly ashamed of them, and yet not boldly honest enough to relate them fairly, disposes of this portion of his work.

He has a chapter headed, "Insurrection des districts de St. Florent, de Cholet, et de Vihiers. Siège d'Angers par les Vendéens." The reader, on turning to this chapter, finds it written as follows. I think it so excellent an example to historians who find themselves in similar difficulties, that I shall transcribe the entire chapter, which runs thus: "Je laisse à ceux qui écriront après moi, sur le département de Maine et Loire, le soin de faire ce Chapitre. La plupart des lecteurs, auxquels cet ouvrage est destiné, ayant été témoins des guerres civiles qui ont ravagé ce département pendant les premières années de la révolution, leur souvenirs suppléeront à mon silence."

It is much to be wished that every historian would treat facts that he does not like in the same way.

On the bank of the river, close beneath Mont Glonne to the west, is the village of Marillais. This is a very ancient, and was once a very celebrated place— nay, is so still among the peasants of the neighbouring arrondissements of Anjou, Poitou, and Brittany. St. Maurille, who was bishop of Angers in the fourth century, established there, we are told by an old ecclesiastical historian, a small chapel, and instituted a fête on the 8th of

September in honour of the Virgin. Now, there seems great reason to believe that this was an attempt on the part of good St. Maurille to turn the worship of some pagan divinity, which was previously adored in this place, into homage to the Christian saint. I have pointed out in Brittany many very evident and curious instances of this. The first preachers of the gospel had very great difficulty in weaning the Celtic population from their veneration for certain trees, stones, fountains, and places, and were but too glad to compromise with the old idolatry, by substituting, if possible, by degrees a new object for the worship which the people would persist in offering up in the old spot.

It was often very many years before this substitution could be entirely effected. Indeed, in Brittany, as I have shewn in my volumes on that province, the mixture of the old superstitions is in many places by no means, even at the present day, entirely worn out. And though Anjou had become French many years before Brittany had ceased to be to all intents and purposes Celtic, yet it was always—more especially the lower Anjou—a backward province, and one in which remnants of Celtic manners and ideas remained much

later than they did in many other parts of the country.

When, therefore, bearing all this in mind, we find that in Charlemagne's time this little chapel had always burning, day and night, three lamps, which were kept up by "*des femmes et des filles, espèce de religieuses,*" we may not unreasonably conjecture that these women were, at least originally, Druid priestesses; and the fête which St. Maurille established on the 8th of September was probably one of the solstice festivals, kept holy by the astronomical religion of the Druids, and thus fixed on that day long before it was pitched on as the day for the celebration of the nativity of the Virgin. For this festival was not established all over Christendom by the papal authority till the end of the seventh century.

The old chronicle of the abbey of St. Florent, which informs us that St. Maurille's chapel was attended by "*des femmes et des filles,*" tells us also that Charlemagne visited it, and caused the chapel to be pulled down, and replaced by one of the twenty-four churches, which he built with the idea of making them correspond with the twenty-four letters of the alphabet. It also remarks that the village was then a place "*très agreste,*"

all which circumstances go to strengthen the probability that the old Druid worship was still lurking there.

Be this, however, as it may, Marillais became afterwards a very celebrated place of pilgrimage. Even after Sergius I. had established the festival of the nativity of the Virgin, the fête was known throughout this part of France as that of Notre Dame de *l'Angevine*, and was indeed still more frequently called "La Fête de l'Angevine."

The prevailing rage for these pilgrimages during the middle ages is sufficiently well known. From the prince to the peasant every man was anxious to become a pilgrim. And those who were unable to accomplish the great pilgrimage to the holy land were fain to content themselves with carrying their devotions to some less distant shrine. Very much has been said, and with reason, of the evils occasioned by these pilgrimages, and the vagabond tastes and disorderly habits they engendered and encouraged. A good deal might perhaps be said, not without equal plausibility, on the other side of the question. But at all events the church has ordinarily been saddled, by the investigators of medieval life and manners, with an unfair portion of the blame which many of the mischiefs they

undoubtedly did occasion may have justly deserved. The fact is that most of the evil consequences which are attributed to them should be considered as having arisen inevitably from the lay, rather than the ecclesiastical, spirit and habits of the age. The love of adventure, the restlessness occasioned by the total want of all domestic or sedentary occupation, and the influence of fashion, were probably more powerful inducements to the knights and nobles of the middle ages to become pilgrims, than any motives of religion or superstition. So much was this the case, and so fully aware of the paramount importance of other duties were the more enlightened ecclesiastics of the period, that distant pilgrimages were by no means so universally encouraged by the church as is generally imagined.

The following very remarkable and interesting letter, written in a century which is generally considered to have been one of the "darkest" of the middle ages, is a curious proof of this. It was written, in the early part of the twelfth century, by Hildebert, archbishop of Tours, to Geoffroi le Bel, count of Anjou, the father of our Henry II.; and would, I think, surprise not a little many a contemner of the dark ages, and indiscrimi-

nate abuser of the blind bigotry and narrow-minded ignorance of their clergy.

“ I am told, valiant and virtuous prince,” begins the Archbishop, “ that it is your intention to offer up your homage at the tomb of St. James. It is not for me to blame this resolution. But, oh prince! whoever has undertaken the task of governing men, has undertaken also the duty of remaining at his post; and when he quits it, unless for some great and useful purpose, he is culpable. You, then, my son, are so, to leave urgent occupations for those which are useless, and to neglect your government and your duty for the sake of practices to which no duty binds you.”

* * * * *

“ You will perhaps say, ‘ I have made a vow, and I will not be perjured before God.’ O prince! if you have bound yourself by a vow, God has bound you to your duty. You have prescribed for yourself one path, while God has marked out for you another. You wish to render homage to the saints. God commands you to imitate them. Consider, therefore, well, whether the merit of a pilgrimage is sufficient to dispense with obedience to this command. If you can bring yourself to the conclusion that it is so — go; I consent to it. Exchange the buckler for

the wallet; and quit the sword for the staff; and depart. But if, on the contrary, you prefer, as none would dare to deny, the welfare of your people to a vagabond life, remain in your palace. Receive the complaints of the oppressed; and live for the benefit of the people, if you desire that the people should live for your's."

If the distant pilgrimages to foreign shrines were matters of amusement to the great, so were the fêtes and days of assembly, which were established in all parts of Christendom, an occasion of rejoicing and pastime to the peasants. The habits and condition of the higher classes are much more changed from what they were in the middle ages than those of their inferiors. And while the practice of going on far-away pilgrimages has entirely ceased among the former, the fête and Saint's day, and even in our own protestant country the village wake, which is the legitimate descendant of the patron Saint's festival, still remain to the latter.

The semblance of devotion, however, has as much deserted them, in most parts of France, as in protestant England; and commerce and amusement are, for the most part, the sole and avowed objects of the assemblies, which still

meet in considerable numbers, on the old day, at several of the shrines which formerly attracted the greatest concourse of devotees. The frequenters of the Fête de l'Angevine are not, indeed, so numerous now as they were in the days when a hundred oxen are recorded to have been insufficient for the consumption of the assembled multitude, and the offerings of the shrine amounted to more than five hundred crowns. But still, on the eighth of September, a large concourse of peasants from the neighbouring parts of Brittany, Anjou, and Poitou, may be seen assembled on the large meadow, through which runs, before falling into the Loire, the little river Evre. The sight must then be a charming one, for the place is admirably adapted to exhibit the scene to advantage.

The Angevine peasants, though by no means so gay in their manners as some of the population farther south, yet present a strong contrast, in this respect, to their Breton neighbours. Instead of the silent and almost sad meetings of that sombre people, the fêtes on the banks of the Loire are enlivened by dancing and music, or, occasionally, singing. And, though the Angevine village belles sometimes complain that the fondness of the men for the game of bowls prevents

partners from being so plentiful as they ought to be, yet it is rarely that the green is deserted as long as the rustic fiddler can be induced to continue his labours.

Not far below Le Marillais, the boat passes the now unimportant little town of Ancenis, seated on its hillock of slates. It is a very ancient, and was once a notable place, possessing a fortress, built in the tenth century. It is said that the tide in the Loire ascended, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, up to this point, and that vessels of war were built here ; and there are certainly some tokens, on various parts of the shore, of the sea having of late retired, at least partially, from this coast. But there are strong grounds for believing that, at a much anterior period, the ocean was, for a long succession of years, advancing in this direction.

Ancenis, at the present day, is chiefly remarkable for its light suspension-bridge of five arches, which span a width of about thirteen hundred feet with much elegance.

Immediately opposite to Ancenis, prettily situated on the side of its wooded hill, is the village of Liré, the birth-place of Joachim du Bellay, the celebrated Archbishop of Bordeaux, in the sixteenth century. During his long compulsory absence from France at

Rome, he composed a great number of sonnets, on the delights of his native country, and the pains of home-sick wanderers.

Of all the languages of Europe, the French is probably the least adapted to this most difficult and artificial mode of poetry; and if even Petrarch's mellifluous warblings, with their monotonously-cadenced sweetness and unchanging burthen, weary the ear and the mind, the poetical archbishop is scarcely likely to find many admirers of the jingling hurdigurdy music of his collection of sonnets. In case, however, the voyager on the Loire should like to see how one of its celebrated sons sung its beauties three hundred years ago, I will transcribe the archbishop's thirty-first sonnet, as it is not very likely to be met with elsewhere.

Heureux, qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage!
 Ou comme celui-la, qui conquit la toison,
 Et puis est retourné, plein d'usage et raison,
 Vivre entre ses parents le reste de sou âge!
 Quand reverrai-je, hélas! de mon petit village
 Fumer la cheminée; et en quelle saison
 Reverrai-je le clos de ma pauvre maison,
 Qui m'est une province, et beaucoup davantage!
 Plus me plaît le séjour, qu'ont Bâti mes ayeux,
 Que des palais romains le front audacieux;
 Plus que le marbre dur, me plaît l'ardoise fine;
 Plus mon Loire gaulois, que le Tibre latin;
 Plus mon petit Liré, que le mont Palatin,
 Et plus que l'air marin, la douceur Angevine.

The boat has hardly passed out of sight of

Ancenis before the lofty, well-preserved tower of Oudon comes in sight; and opposite to it, on the southern bank of the river, the extensive ruins of the huge old castle of Champ-toceaux, whose rugged masses, partly clothed with a luxurious growth of bushes and brambles, make a picturesque appearance on the top of their rocky hill. Both of these relics of feodality have their histories and traditions attached to them. But it would take a whole chapter, which I have not to spare, to tell at length, and with all its circumstances, as it deserves, the story of Jean and Julien de Maletroit, lords of Oudon, in 1526; how these barons bold, taking a hint, if the truth must be told from the most christian kings, their masters, made bad money in this their tower of Oudon, and compelled their vassals to take it for good; how these good-for-nothing vassals, instead of being thankful for any sort of money their lords might please to give them, as they ought to have been, seeing that they were in luck not to receive kicks instead of any half-pence at all, complained to the king; and how King Francis I., being greatly incensed at this invasion of his prerogative, laid siege to the castle of Oudon, as he was passing by Nantes on his return from Spain; took Jean and Julien Maletroit, prisoners, to

Nantes, and there had them tried, condemned, and executed. Then, on the other side of the water, have not both Henry Plantagenet and Saint Louis left memorials of their passage under the walls of Champtoceaux? At a later period, in the romantic history of the wars between Jean de Montfort and Charles de Blois for the sovereignty of Brittany, Champtoceaux often played a prominent part; and in 1420, it was the scene of the unrelenting and perfidious Margaret de Clisson's vengeance against the descendants of the house of Montfort. But all these matters would fill a volume; and a very amusing one might be written on the chateau of Champtoceaux, beginning with old Bourdigné's naïf account of its foundation, by Celsus, the Roman questor, and ending with its destruction by order of the Breton parliament, assembled at Vannes, on the 16th of February, 1424.

The imperative conditions of time and space make it impossible for me to do more than barely hint at all these interesting details; more especially as I am under engagement to get to Nantes by the end of this chapter, which ought to be drawing to its close.

Almost immediately after quitting Champtoceaux, and losing sight of its more hale and hearty neighbour, the veteran tower of

Oudon, the traveller sees, in the distance, a vast mass of dark-coloured building, of most inexplicable form and appearance. At first, it looks more like very extensive fortifications than any thing else. But, as the boat approaches, it is soon perceived that the unaccountable congeries of dead walls, innumerable angles, and many terraces, rising without order, regularity, or beauty, cannot serve to this purpose, and the heterogeneous pile, which covers a whole hill-side, becomes more unintelligible than ever. If, after uselessly racking his brains, the puzzled stranger asks his neighbour on the deck of the steamer for what purpose all those stones and mortar were heaped together in a manner so totally unlike any thing else that ever was seen, he will, probably, simply be told that it is called "Les Folies Siffait." But a more persevering inquiry into the origin of these "Folies" will lead him to think that they might deserve a better name, as it seems that the strange mass was put together by a benevolent proprietor of the neighbourhood, for the sake of giving employment to a large number of labourers, who were thrown out of work during a very hard winter. His benevolent purpose, however, might certainly have been as effectually achieved by constructing an edifice

which might have served some purpose of either utility or beauty. The good man was probably determined, that in this case virtue should be its own exceeding great reward, and, therefore, employed his labourers on a task which, by no possible contingency, could bring a return of either pleasure or profit to himself or any one else.

It is very near this spot that we finally bid adieu to Anjou, and for the short remainder of the voyage to Nantes have the communes of the department of La Loire Inferieure on either side of us. This department was one of the five into which the ancient province of Brittany was divided. La Loire Inferieure has, however, long since ceased to be distinguished by any of the peculiarities which yet make the inhabitants of the more western and northern parts of the ancient duchy a distinct people. It is no longer a part of "la Bretagne *Bretonnante*." The Celtic language has given place entirely to the French. The ancient costume and habits of the Breton race have been gradually abandoned, and the department is become, to all intents and purposes, part of France, and is inhabited by Frenchmen, which certainly cannot be said of the departments of Morbihan, Finistere, and great part of the Côtes du Nord. The causes of

this are easily understood. The Loire, a vast highway of communication and traffic, has powerfully tended to produce that intercourse with the neighbouring provinces which never fails to wear out the traces of local characteristics and distinct nationality; and the existence of a large and important commercial city, such as Nantes, produces a similar effect, by radiating to a considerable distance around it the town born ideas and habits communicated to it by its trade and constant relations with the capital. Those, therefore, who would see Brittany and the Bretons, must seek them in the more western parts of the province, and be prepared to find the peasants of La Loire Inferieure, though possessing many characteristic marks of habit and opinion, yet in all respects a French people.

I quitted Anjou with much greater regret than I had Touraine. Though it has never been vaunted, as its perhaps more fertile neighbour-province has, it is really far more picturesque, far more varied, and is richer in localities of historical interest. The portion of the river which runs through Anjou is, in fact, the only truly picturesque part of the Loire—at least, of that portion of it below Orleans. And though I cannot agree with some Angevine writers that their stream is

the most beautiful in Europe, I am most ready to testify that in the part of its course which washes their fields it is indeed a most lovely river, and most worthy of being visited by all lovers of the softer and more smiling style of river scenery.

I would, however, recommend any one who had thoughts of making the voyage, not to begin it above Saumur, unless, indeed, its "inexplosible" steamboats might be deemed the pleasantest mode of conveyance to the different interesting cities on its banks.

Soon after quitting Anjou, the irregular mass of Nantes cathedral is seen above the dense crowd of buildings which surrounds it; then the low banks of a vast, flat meadow, occupying a large island, which divides the stream just above the town, are skirted by; in a minute or two more *Le Riverain* puffs up alongside of the quay, under the walls of the old castle, and we are at Nantes.

This portion of the voyage from Orleans to Nantes — the half day's journey, that is to say, from Angers to the latter capital — had been performed at a speed considerably greater than that of the "Inexplosibles" in which I had descended the upper part of the river. Whether this was occasioned entirely by the superior power of the high-pressure engines

of Le Riverain, or whether it might be, in some degree, to be attributed to the stronger current and larger body of water in the river, I cannot say. But be this as it may, I am inclined to recommend the smaller boats of the younger company to voyagers on the Loire, both because increased speed in passing between banks teeming with objects of interest could hardly be deemed an advantage by any traveller, and because, in cleanliness and neatness, the Inexplosibles have, at all events, the advantage.

CHAPTER XIX.

First Appearance of Nantes—Islands in Front of it—Ancient Streets in Nantes—Mode of Building—La Juiverie—Curious Inscription on a House in it—The Cathedral—Exterior—Nave—Its Foundation—St. Felix—His Claims to Canonization—Subsequent Fortunes of the Cathedral—Bishop Hocron and the Golden Apple—Revenues of Nantes in the Tenth Century—Foundation of the Present Cathedral Edifice—Inscription—Tomb of Francis II.—Casket containing Duchess Anne's Heart—Curious Inscriptions—Inhabitants of the Old Part of the Town—The Chateau—Henry IV.'s First Visit to Nantes—Appearance of the Castle—Duchesse de Berri—Cardinal de Retz—Return to l'Hotel de l'Europe.

NANTES does not make so handsome an appearance to those approaching it by the river as I had been led to expect. The Loire is divided here by no less than three islands of different sizes, all abreast in front of the town. The smallest of these, called the Isle Feydeau, is nearest the northern bank, and is entirely covered by the town; the other two, much larger, which lie to the south of it, are chiefly occupied by extensive flat meadows. The great road from Nantes to the south crossed them both, and is bordered with houses most

part of the way to the southern bank of the river.

The prospect, then, which is presented to the visitor on arriving at Nantes by the Loire, when the steamer is moored to the quai du Port Maillard, immediately above the Isle Feydeau, consists of a vast extent of low, watery-looking meadows, intersected by a variety of streams, on the left hand; in front, the Isle Feydeau, with a fish-market occupying the extreme point of it, and the two bridges, which on either side connect it with the main land and its neighbour isle; and on the right, the most ancient part of the town, with the chateau immediately overlooking the quay, and behind it a confused mass of buildings occupying the sides of a gentle eminence, the top of which is crowned by the hoary, lumpish-looking towers of the cathedral.

On stepping from the boat, I sought and found quarters at an hotel on the Isle Feydeau—de l'Europe I think it was called—and remained there the two days which it took me to satisfy my curiosity respecting the town of Nantes.

It was about two or three o'clock when Le Riverain arrived; and I had plenty of time, therefore, after taking possession of the chamber allotted to me at my inn, to take a turn

in the town. Quitting the Isle Feydeau by the bridge by which I had entered it, I struck into the interior of the town due northwards, and soon found myself in the midst of the oldest quarter of the city. Many of the streets even here are rapidly changing their ancient appearance. The old houses, with their stories projecting one above the other, till they nearly met at top and shut in the narrow street beneath them, depriving the inhabitants of both light and air, are continually being replaced by new perpendicular façades. The dark slate-covered walls, which were formerly the universal mode of building here, are giving way to stone, and the huge, small-paned casements, which stretched across the whole front of many of the houses, to long, upright, modern-shaped windows. There are still, however, remaining, though they are becoming less numerous from day to day, specimens of the old streets amply sufficient to show what Nantes was in the olden time.

The ancient practice almost universal formerly throughout the cities of Europe of assigning to the Jews a quarter of their own, which alone they were permitted to inhabit, and in which they were shut up at night, is still shown to have prevailed here by the existence of a street called to the present day

“*La Juiverie.*” There is in this street an old house, with a curious frontage, ornamented with various apparently allegorical figures, and several unintelligible inscriptions. One, however, of them is clear enough, and marks the religion of the former owner. It is simply “*expecto donec veniat,*” and alludes, of course, to the Messiah.

In the midst of these ancient buildings is the huge, lofty mass of the cathedral dedicated to St. Peter. This church is totally devoid of any pretensions to symmetry or beauty of any kind externally. The nave is certainly of a noble height; but the two heavy, massive towers, scarcely, if at all, exceeding in altitude the ridge of the roof, are a dis-sight rather than an ornament. The choir is low and mean, and of the transepts a part only of one has been achieved.

In the inside, the sole thing to admire is the loftiness of the nave, which, however, is far too short for its other proportions. The six arches on either side of it are exceedingly grand and bold, regarded as detached fragments of architecture; but the total want of uniformity, symmetry, and justness of proportion in the other parts of the edifice, prevent them from giving the effect they would otherwise be calculated to produce.

The fact is that the fabric, as it at present exists, is a patchwork construction, badly put together. The first cathedral of Nantes was built, in the sixteenth century, by Euhemerus, then bishop of that city, and was dedicated by St. Euphrane, archbishop of Tours, assisted by St. Felix, bishop of Nantes, the successor of Euhemerus, and the bishops of Vannes, Rennes, Angers, and Mans, on the 30th of September, 560. Fortunatus, the poetical bishop of Poitiers, who was a contemporary of Felix, has left us a latin poem, giving a detailed account of the event.

This St. Felix appears to have owed his canonization to his exertions for the temporal benefit of his flock, rather than to any other more strictly episcopal merit. And his name has been perpetuated in the recollection of his fellow-citizens in a manner less likely to fail in preserving his memory than a place in Rome's calendar might have proved. The original city was, it should seem, built, not on the immediate bank of the river, but with the wide expanse of the meadow, now called the "prairie de la Madelaine," between its walls and the stream. The disadvantages of this were perceived by Felix, who undertook the vast work of remedying them by forming that branch of the Loire which now flows along

the quays beneath the chateau, and makes the "prairie de la Madelaine" an island. And this part of the stream bears, to the present day, the name of the "Canal de St. Felix." Le Baud, the first historian of Brittany, thus mentions this important and still extremely useful work. "Il fist fouyr," says he, "un profond et large fossé transversal de l'ancien cours de la Loire, qu'il fist courir joux les murs de la cité, à fin d'eschiver le labour des citoyens qui allaient quérir les marchandises jusques au fleuve."

If the spirit of St. Felix were to revisit the scene of his labours, he would be gratified by finding his canal crowded with barges, boats, and steamers, and conducting more wealth to the magazines and quays of his city in a day than it did in a month in his time. But the cathedral which he dedicated has not fared so well, for, in 946, one of his successors, a very different sort of bishop from himself, one Hocron, as old Le Baud tells us, "fist desmolir une tour, qui encore estait desmourée des anciens édifices de celle église *pour la convoitise d'une pomme dorée* qui estoit sur ladicte tour, dont il fust moqué et desprisé par le dict duc Alain, et par honte délaissa l'evesché de Nantes, et s'en retourna à Saint Paul, où premier il avoit esté ordonné."

What a strange picture of savage-like barbarism! Bishop Hocron, with much about the wisdom and sense of a child who cries for the top brick of the chimney, pulls down the last remaining tower of his cathedral to get at the gilt apple on the top of it. It is consoling, however, to find that this feat made his diocese too hot for him, and the fact, as it is related by the historian, is a remarkable instance of the force of opinion in the tenth century. It is worth noticing, too, that Le Baud goes on to relate, without any commentary or remark, that *the son of the archbishop* of Dol was chosen by the duke to succeed him in his bishoprick.

About the same time, we find the following curious notice of the fiscal value of the town of Nantes in those days, and of the proportion it bore to that of other towns. Foulques, count of Anjou, had married the widow of Duke Alain, and had taken his wife and stepson, the young Drogon, to his city of Angers, to which place he commanded to be brought to him the revenues for the year of the city of Nantes. Whereupon, there were brought to him "un jour ainsi qu'il jouoit aux tables en sa salle," three sacks full of "deniers," and four boat-loads of great fish; "dont il fust moult esmerveillé en son courage, et raconta

à tous les assistans, qu'il n'y avoit si riche ni si puissant en tout le royaume de France, que celui qui pouvoit posséder la cité de Nantes."

The cathedral had been rebuilt, and a second time in part destroyed, before the middle of the fifteenth century. In 1434, John V., then duke of Brittany, undertook to rebuild it; and the lofty nave which we now see is his work. The grand portal, which, by itself, is certainly fine, was the first part executed, and bore inscribed upon it the following record of its foundation.

" L'an mil quatre cent trente quatre
A my-Avril sans moult rabattre,
Au portail de cette Eglise
Fut la première pierre assise."

The duke laid the first stone; Jean de Malestroit, then bishop, placed the second; the young prince Francis, the third; the chapter, the fourth; the prince Peter, the fifth; and the town, by deputy, the sixth. The works, however, advanced but very slowly, and in 1525 we find them still unfinished. In fact, the choir, as it at present exists, low, heavy, and sombre, was part of the second church.

The small part of the south transept which has been completed has been turned into a sepulchral chapel for the reception of the

tomb of Francis II., the last duke of Brittany, which was formerly in the church of the Carmelites, destroyed at the revolution. This tomb, which is still considered one of the great lions of the town, was the chef d'œuvre of Michel Colomb, a native of the remote little Breton town, St. Pol de Leon, and one of the most talented sculptors of his day. It is a large altar tomb, about five feet high, on which repose the figures, a little larger than life, of Francis II. and Margaret de Foix, his second wife. At the four corners of the tomb are four statues, representing the four cardinal virtues. The figure which is intended for "Prudence" is, oddly enough, represented with two visages, which looks very much as if Michel Colomb's notion of that virtue came very near to what we should call "Dissimulation." Thirty-two smaller figures, of very delicate workmanship, surround the tomb, and are divided from each other by arabesque designs very elegantly executed. More attention has apparently been paid by the artist to these details, and to the lavish adornment of his work by an unsparing profusion of labour, than to the principal figures, which have no unusual degree of merit.

This tomb was opened on the 16th of October, 1727, about two hundred years after the

bodies of its tenants were placed in it. Between the leaden coffins of Francis and Margaret, which were in good repair, and ornamented with the ermine of Brittany, was a small leaden vessel, which was found to contain a golden casket, in the form of a heart. This had formerly contained the heart of the celebrated duchess Anne, who was so much beloved by her Breton subjects, that her memory still flourishes among them, and many a history is yet preserved by the peasants of "la bonne Duchesse." The little vessel was found no longer to contain anything but a little water, and the remains of a scapulary; but the following inscription was still perfectly legible.

“ En ce petit vaisseau, de fin or pur et munde
 Repose un plus grand cueur que onque Dame ent au monde.
 Anne fut le nom d'elle; en Francee deux fois Royne,
 Duchesse des Bretons, royale et souveraine.
 Ce cueur fut si hault que de la terre aux cieulx
 Sa vertu libérale accroissait mieulx et mieulx.
 Mais Dieu en a repris sa portion meilleure,
 Et ceste part terrestre en grand deuil nous demeure.
 IX Janvier. M. V. XIII.”

On the interior lining of the casket were engraved the following lines, two on each side.

O cueur caste et pudique! O juste et benoist cueur!
 Cueur magnanime et franc, de tout vice vainqueur!
 O cueur digne entre tous de couronne céleste,
 Ores est ton cher esprit hors de paisne et moleste.

With the exception of the time it took me to examine all the details and rich workmanship of this tomb, the cathedral did not detain me long. Turning in a south-westerly direction from its great door, I rambled through several streets, inhabited, it seemed to me, principally by old clothes dealers and brokers; a class of people who, for some latent cause, invariably inhabit, in every city, the oldest and most tumble-down part of it, till I once more emerged on the quay by the side of the old castle.

The external walls of this ancient historical residence of the independent dukes of Brittany are all that remain to indicate to the eye its former strength and magnificence. The interior is filled with modern buildings, and is used as a magazine for military stores. The circuit of the outward wall, however, which, with its fortifications, occupied a fortieth part of the whole town, sufficiently attests its former importance, and justifies the oft-cited exclamation of Henry IV., when he first saw it. "Ventre saint gris! les Ducs de Bretagne n'étaient pas de petits compagnons!"

On the side towards the Loire, which is the first that presents itself to a stranger arriving at Nantes, the castle does not make so imposing an appearance as it deserves to do. For

the quay, which now occupies the space between it and the river, is raised to nearly half the height of the walls, and thus destroys much of the effect that would be produced if their whole mass were visible.

A great variety of historical events have passed within the walls of this chateau from the time of its foundation, by Alain Barbetorte, duke of Brittany, in the tenth century, to the confinement there of the Duchess de Berri, in 1832, previous to her removal to Blaye. She was not the first royal prisoner its gates have closed on by a good many. But by far the most important of the souvenirs attached to the castle of Nantes is the promulgation of the celebrated edict of Nantes by Henry IV. The Cardinal de Retz, so well known by his memoirs of himself, was a prisoner here in the year 1654; and the spot from which he effected the hazardous escape, so minutely related in his autobiography, is still pointed out. It took place at five o'clock in the afternoon of the eighth of August, and was, therefore, accomplished in broad daylight, which makes his final success seem little less than miraculous. It certainly could never have been achieved had not the accident, which the worthy cardinal relates so complaisantly, of the poor Jacobin friar drowning

himself as he was bathing, fortunately occurred just at the moment, to draw off the attention of all passers along the quay.

From the chateau I returned across the narrow stream that separates the Isle Feydeau from the bank of the river, by the easternmost of the two bridges which connect its streets with those of the main part of the town, and returned to my inn with the intention of devoting the whole of the next morning to a long walk in the newer and more busy parts of the city.

CHAPTER XX.

Nantes — Walk along the Quays — The Bourse — Character of the Nantais Merchants — and Population generally — Quai de la Fosse — Characteristics common to Seaport Towns — Those peculiar to Nantes — Former Prosperity of Nantes — Slave Trade — Amount of Imports and Exports before the Revolution — Present Population of the Town — Consumption of Animal Food — Quai des Constructions — Quai d' Aiguillon — The Duc d' Aiguillon's Purchase of the post of Lieutenant-general of the Province — La Sylphe Steamer — Hill below the Town — View from it — Ferry — Isle des Chevaliers — Trentemoux — View of Nantes — Rencontre with an Idiot — Story of "La Fille de la Puniton."

THE next morning, as early as I thought it likely that all the various business of the port would be commenced, I set forth for a stroll of observation along the line of quays which border the Loire for a distance of a league. Passing westward along the entire length of the Isle Feydeau through a long, sombre street, I crossed the bridge, which, at the western extremity of the isle, traverses the narrow stream that separates it from the shore exactly opposite to the Bourse. This is a neat, modern, stone building, standing isolated, with a little "place" planted with

trees in front of it. Neither now, nor on passing it subsequently at other hours of the day, did I observe any very animated appearance of business being carried on there. If, however, the Bourse of Nantes cannot be celebrated for the *quantity* of affairs transacted there, it may, according to general report, for the *quality* of them. For the habits of trade, and the loose morality of a large city, have not been able to destroy the indigenous home-spun honesty of the Breton character; and Nantes has always been celebrated among the commercial cities of France for the uprightness and honesty of her merchants, and the honourable exactitude of their dealings. Of all the large towns of France, Nantes, too, has the character of being the least demoralized in the habits and manners of its citizens of all classes, and the least fertile in all the various evidences of crime. This it, of course, owes to its position between the districts inhabited by two races — the Bretons and the Vendéans, both equally detesting the revolution, and the new standard of morality and duty it has brought with it, equally nurtured in the intimately-allied virtues of loyalty, honour, and honesty, and both equally attached to the religion and principles of their fathers.

After passing the short "Quai de la Bourse," I found myself at the commencement of a long line of handsome, well-grown trees, which line the entire length of the "Quai de la Fosse." This quay is the largest and most important of the city, and stretches along the whole of the more commercial part of the town.

The scene of bustle and business which the quay de la Fosse presented was such as characterises every thriving seaport town. And these have, in all countries, many features of general resemblance which mark them as belonging to the same class. There were the slop-shops exhibiting red baize shirts; flat, round, tarpaulin hats, and strangely-latitudinarian, canvass inexpressibles. There were the curiosity shops, unfailing accompaniments of a seaport, displaying their heterogeneous store of shells, Indian clubs and slippers, sea-fans, monkeys, macaws, and Chinese idols. There were the drinking houses, setting forth their polyglott announcements of wine, brandy, and beer, in half a dozen different languages; the sail-makers, ship-brokers, block-makers, etc., etc., as usual. Then the active business on the river, and the side of the quay adjoining it, enlivened the scene with the usual sights and sounds. Innumerable barrels, bearing all sorts of in-

explicable hieroglyphics and devices, heaps of logwood, bags of coffee, piles of skins, sheafs of split cane, strange-smelling drugs, etc., etc., were strewn upon the quay in motley, and one would have thought inextricable, confusion. Every here and there were little wooden houses, moveable on wheels, in each of which sat a clerk, pen in hand, tranquil amid the surrounding bustle, but busily engaged in regulating the multifarious labours of the swarming ant-hill.

Meanwhile, the ear is as variously and actively employed as the eye. Old women screamingly inviting the hungry to purchase savoury morsels of cold, fried fish, or the more luxurious and costly dainty bit of a black pudding, vie with hoarse excisemen, bellowing forth the tally of the goods of which they are taking account. And here and there the measured merry cheer of a party of English sailors, engaged in hoisting their cargo in or out of their vessel, may be heard at regular intervals above the indiscriminate jabbering, squabbling, screaming, and bawling of a French crew, engaged in the same operation; while, from time to time, a steam-boat just arrived from Paimbœuf, or about to start down the river, drowns all other noise with its own panting, hissing, and bellowing.

All these sights and sounds are the common characteristics of seaport and commercial towns. But that which gives to the "quai de la Fosse," at Nantes, a character and appearance peculiar to itself is the splendid row of large trees, under whose spreading shade all these unsylvan operations take place. There is a degree of contrast between the quiet, rural verdure of their foliage and the busy city scene beneath them, which is striking, and imparts a degree of picturesque interest to persons and things not ordinarily remarkable for that quality.

Nantes is, at the present day, a thriving town, though its commerce is far from being what it was before France lost her colonies. During the latter half of the last century, the slave trade was the most important and lucrative branch of commerce exercised by the Nantes merchants. Thirty ships, on the average, were annually employed in this speculation, and they seized, on the coast of Africa, annually, about twelve thousand slaves. It used to be said that a fifth part of these perished on the passage; but there is reason to believe that the proportion of deaths was, in reality, much larger than that. Each slave was estimated to cost the merchant seven hundred and fifty francs, and was sold by him to

the planter for an average sum of eighteen hundred francs.

In the year 1790, the total value of goods imported at Nantes amounted to 40,703,232 livres, and that of exports to 23,163,386 livres. At that period, the third part of all the colonial produce imported into France was brought to the port of Nantes, and, with regard to its commerce with the Antilles, it was considered the second port in the kingdom. This is very far from being the case at the present day. A great portion of its former trade has been annihilated by the loss of the French colonial possessions, and Havre has run away with another portion. The present population of the town is 77,982. The consumption of meat is, on the average, 2,724 oxen; 20,597 calves; 24,278 sheep; and 9,058 pigs—a very small quantity of animal food for the population. Yet distress is not said to be common at Nantes.

I strolled leisurely along the whole length of the Quai de la Fosse, and then, emerging from the shade of its fine trees, pursued my way along the “quai des constructions,” which succeeds it. A great number of small vessels were here on the stocks in different stages of forwardness; and the sound of the hammer, the saw, and the axe, together with several

reeking cauldrons of pitch, each suspended over its blazing fire of chips, and the clatter of copper sheeting, rendered the "quai des constructions" as busy a scene, in its line, as the more central quai de la Fosse.

Beyond this is the "quai d'Aiguillon," named after the Duc d'Aiguillon, who, in the year 1755, purchased the appointment of lieutenant-general of the province of Brittany for the sum of six hundred thousand livres. The emoluments of the place, however, would seem to have been hardly worth so large a sum, for they were estimated at from twenty-five to twenty-six thousand livres only per annum. Moreover, at the time of the Duke's purchase, it was made incumbent on the lieutenant-general to reside three months in every year in his province.

The buildings on this quay seemed to consist principally of large magazines for maritime stores, and two or three royal warehouses for various purposes. There was not much appearance of active business going on there, nor did I observe more than two vessels lying alongside of it, one of which was a fine large ship about to sail the next day for New South Wales, and the other the steamer "La Sylphe," which runs between Nantes and Bourdeaux. I thought that the accommodations on board

her seemed singularly insufficient for making such a voyage with any degree of comfort; and *La Sylphe* herself, with her forty-horse power, seemed to me far too Sylph-like in her size and proportions to be comfortably trusted on such an expedition in any but perfectly fine weather.

Beyond the quai d'Aiguillon, the river is for a short space free from islands; but the opposite bank is low and sandy, and altogether, except the effect of the broad expanse of water, the stream has no beauty here. A little farther down, the hill on which the western and more modern part of the city is built, and which slopes gently down to the water edge in the town, closes in upon the river suddenly, and forms an almost precipitous descent. Considerable quarries are worked in the face of this cliff, and I climbed up to the top of it in the hopes that it might command a view of the town. In this, however, I was disappointed. But in the opposite direction it afforded a wide, though by no means pleasant, prospect over the expanding river, and the flat, sandy meadows, that seemed to form the principal feature of country through which it flows below the town. Here and there in the distance a fishing-boat might be seen ascending the river with the tide, and on the wide-

spreading sands on the other side two or three not unpicturesque groups of fishermen were engaged in spreading out their nets to dry in the now blazing heat of the sun, and repairing the damages they had sustained during their last cruise. A little idealizing and arrangement, and judicious managing of sun and shade, might have enabled a Calcott or a Stanfield to have found there the materials of a pretty picture; but on the whole the naked reality of the scene was monotonous and dreary.

Just opposite to the above mentioned quarries there is a ferry which communicates with the little village of Trentemoux, on the opposite side of the river, and I determined, instead of returning to the town along the quays, to cross and walk back on the other side. By the time I had settled this plan of operations, the old Charon of the ferry below, which I could see from the top of the hill, had nearly got together a boat-load of passengers, and I was obliged to descend the cliff somewhat more precipitously than prudence warranted, to be in time for that trip. I was just soon enough to be conveyed to the other side for the moderate charge of one sou, which the old man said was all very well in summer, when there were plenty of passengers, and

nothing to do but to dip the oars in the water and lift them out again, but was very hard upon him in winter, when fares were scarce, and it was often no joke at all to get across.

It is impossible to conceive a more wretched-looking dwelling-place than the little village of Trentemoux. It is situated on a long strip of land, divided from the southern bank of the river by a narrow streamlet, called the "Isle des Chevaliers." This miserable isle consists of about equal portions of marsh, parched, half-barren meadow, and sheer sand; and a few miserable houses, which seemed to be burrowing in the latter, form the village of Trentemoux, and the homes of a few fishermen and boat-builders and their families, to whom Trentemoux is the most important, and, doubtless, the best-loved spot on earth! I had a broiling walk along the shore of this uninviting isle; but I did not regret having chosen this way of returning to the town, as it afforded by far the best view of Nantes I could find. As seen from the Isle des Chevaliers, the old town, with its massive cathedral in the background, and the long line of the quai de la Fosse, with its handsome trees skirting the river, below it, and the wide extent of the flat "Prairie au Duc," with its grazing herds for the foreground, Nantes makes a handsome

and pleasing appearance. This "Prairie au Duc" occupies a large island exactly in front of the quai de la Fosse, and between it and the Isle des Chevaliers.

As I was pursuing my hot journey along the sandy shore of the island, I was startled by a strange sound on my left; and, on advancing a little in that direction towards a small arm of the river, which, straying from the stream, found a lazy way among the sand, I discovered that it proceeded from a poor idiot girl, who was sitting in an old abandoned boat that lay rotting in the sun. She was miserably clad in an old rug, and had not any covering whatever on her head; and if her poor brain had not been already dried up, the heat of the sun, that was shining upon her in unmitigated power, was enough to have done so. From time to time, she uttered the most horrid cries, and shook her hideous head and red, dishevelled hair backwards and forwards incessantly. She took no notice apparently of my approach, and I hastened to quit the spot, for the sight of the unfortunate creature was more horrible and painful than I can describe.

The sight of this poor girl brought to my recollection forcibly the story of the "Fille de la Punition," so well told by the Vicomte Walsh in his "Lettres Vendéenes." For a

moment, till the recollection of dates showed me that it could not be, I fancied that I had met with that awful creature herself. She must, however, be, I suppose, long since dead. On reaching Nantes, I made several inquiries about "La fille de la Punition," but could learn no more than that such a being had really existed, and that her terrible history was well known at Nantes.

La Fille de la Punition was the daughter of a man and woman, who, during the worst time of the revolutionary horrors, drove, at Nantes, the disgusting trade of scenting out and hunting down concealed royalists and Vendéens, whom they denounced to the infamous committee of public safety. It is difficult to conceive a deeper depth of infamy than those descended to who practised such a calling in order to support existence. But this was reached by the parents of "La Fille de la Punition." For not the want of the necessaries of life, but the most miserly avarice, was the incitement which induced them thus to traffic in blood. And that nothing might be wanting to fill up the measure of their revolting wickedness, and justify the loathing and execration of mankind, they took a fiend-like pleasure in witnessing the executions which resulted from their denouncements.

The woman, especially, never failed to be present in the foremost rank of spectators in the Place du Bouffay, at Nantes, morning after morning, to glut her unnatural ferocity with the sight of the blood of the victims, and the sound of their death-cry. She would insult the sufferers on the scaffold, and when the last shriek of the victim was heard, drunk with gratified blood-thirstiness, and excited to ecstasy by the sight and sound of suffering and death, she would shout forth the detestable burthen of one of the revolutionary songs,

Du sang! Du sang! il faut du sang,
Pour régénérer la republique!

During the most fearful period of the daily executions, this female was with child. Think! what could be the child of such a mother, nurtured on milk drawn from a bosom palpitating with such joys! That child was "La Fille de la Punition." She was born an idiot, and grew up misshapen and hideous in every feature. By one of those mysterious operations of nature, whose results are so often observed, though the mode of agency remains inscrutable, this wretched creature's constant yell was an exact imitation of a death-shriek. And thus, when in after-years her miserable parents would fain have forgotten the past,

and would, if possible, have frequented the society of their fellow-creatures, La Fille de la Punition was there to keep alive their own remorse, and awaken in others the associations of too faithful memory by her constant horrid cry. By night as well as by day, sleeping or waking, the same fearful voice was for ever ringing in their ears. In vain every sort of brutal treatment was resorted to by the wretched parents to compel *the daughter of their punishment* to cease the repetition of that well-remembered sound; it could neither be suppressed nor changed. When ill-used at home, the unfortunate creature would escape into the fields and wander through the country, scaring the peasants with her awful cry, and was thus well known in the neighbourhood by the not inappropriate title of “La Fille de la Punition.”

Such she had most unquestionably been through a long series of years to her wretched, and very deservedly-punished parents. The house in which they dwelt stood in the neighbourhood of the city, isolated from other habitations, and was as universally shunned by the neighbours of all classes, as if it had been smitten with a pestilence, or were one of those lazar-houses appropriated to the reception of those wretched outcasts, the lepers, which so

generally were established on the outskirts of large cities during the middle ages. The poorest beggar would not enter the polluted dwelling of the feeders of the guillotine ; and as often as the unfortunate daughter of the outcast was seen in her wanderings by the superstitious and horror-stricken peasants, so often was the fearful story of her birth repeated, and set before the eyes of the rising generation as the visible judgment of God upon the traffickers in blood.

CHAPTER XXI.

French Tables d'Hôte—Those of Germany — Invariable Company met at them in France — French “Commis Voyageur” — and English “Bagman” — Disagreeable Manners of the Former — and Gross Language — Anecdote — Present State of France — Physical Improvement and Progress — Moral Retrogression — Compatibility of the Two — Causes of Demoralization in France — Tendency to Social Dissolution — Favourite Newspapers in the Provinces — Charivari — National — Siècle — Presse — Circulating Libraries — Favourite Authors — Provincial Readers — Anecdote — Extent of Demoralization — Peasantry.

I RETURNED from my walk to dine at five o'clock at the table d'hôte of the Hôtel de l'Europe. When I first travelled on the continent of Europe, I was much pleased with this mode of accomplishing the important business of dining. It was something new; and the opportunity it afforded me of observing men and manners amused me. But I soon began to get exceedingly tired of the tables d'hôte in France. In Germany they are much more amusing. From what cause it arises I know not—perhaps simply from the Germans being a more travelling people than the French—

but in Germany the company assembled around mine host's table is sure to be more or less varied in its component parts; and the hour of dinner in every new town never fails to bring with it something new to observe and be amused by. At the public tables of Germany, moreover, you are in no danger of being disgusted by improprieties; and though a certain homeliness of manners may be observed, you are sure to find perfect courtesy and kindness.

In every respect, the reverse is the case in France. The company at the tables d'hôte throughout the French provinces almost invariably consists of commis-voyageurs — anglicè, bagmen — cockney-landicè, commercial gentlemen. The diligences and hotels swarm with them, and, in the great majority of cases, every single individual at the table at which you have to dine belongs to this class. At the best hotel in the town or the worst this is equally the case; and if you take care to arrive too late for dinner, and desire something to be set before you afterwards, it is twenty to one that you find two or three commercial gentlemen also late, and ready to join your mess.

Now, although the term "commis voyageur" may be correctly translated into Eng-

lish as above, I must beg to state most distinctly that the class of men similarly employed in England are as different from the commis voyageurs of France, as any one thing English is from any thing French. My home travels have not left me unacquainted with the race of English commercial travellers, though they are much less exposed to the observation of the vulgar than abroad, seeing that they have frequently their own inns, or at least their own room in every inn. It so happens, however, that, despite these precautions of exclusiveness, I have more than once dined at "a commercial table" — once, as I very well remember, some years ago, at Caermarthen — upon which occasion, though possibly a slight shade of contempt might have mingled with the evidences of pitying condescension, which were manifest among the gentlemen travellers, when it was found that I was not "travelling for any article" of a more profitable and tangible description than my own amusement; and, though I found myself sconced of my beer by being informed that "it was not the etiquette to take malt liquor at their table," I was on the whole perfectly contented with my companions.

To speak seriously, however, this class of men in England are as incapable of the gross

manners and offensive improprieties which a traveller in France—excepting of course such as journey, en grand seigneur, with their own carriage, and bespeak private rooms — is exposed to from his inevitable association with the ubiquitous commis voyageurs, as the most highly-educated gentleman could be.

They constantly sit down to table with their hats on; and this I have frequently observed to be equally the case, when occasionally female travellers have chanced to be present. This is certainly a trifling matter, but still is worth noticing, as a slight trait of the retrograding civilization of “polite” France.

Their personal habits, and those connected with the economy and arrangement of the dinner-table, are frequently such as to go far towards rendering any dinner unnecessary for the nonce to any unseasoned stranger who may chance to fall among them.

But the worst annoyance, as well as the most important indication of national character, is their conversation and language. The topics of their talk are frequently such as to evince a total demoralization, not with regard to any one particular vice only, but on every point of principle and moral sentiment. And it has over and over again oc-

curred to me to hear language used before respectable females, which it is impossible to hint at specifically in these pages, which no Englishman would dream of uttering in the presence of a woman, and which many by no means remarkable for refined language would be startled to hear in any tolerably decent exclusively male society.

Upon one occasion, I occupied the interior of a diligence together with four of these delightful companions. There was, therefore, room for one more person in the vehicle. It was between La Rochelle and Rochefort; and we had not long quitted the former town, when the coach stopped in a little village, and M. le Curé was seen approaching, evidently prepared for a journey. The ingenuous youths, my fellow-travellers, seemed highly delighted at the prospect of this accession to our party; and with bursts of laughter congratulated themselves on the amusement they should have in the course of the journey, from tormenting and insulting the poor ecclesiastic by blasphemous and obscene conversation. Fortunately, however, for me as well as himself, M. le Curé had taken a place in the coupé, and was thus secured from the disgusting and dastardly blackguardism of

these interesting representatives of La Jeune France.

And yet these were men with decent coats on their backs, earning by their employment an ample and comfortable maintenance, and holding a responsible, and what ought to be respectable, station in society ! An old priest, to whom I related these facts upon a subsequent occasion, shook his head, and said that it was very bad, but did not appear the least surprised at it ; and evidently disbelieved me, when, in answer to a question, I assured him that such things did not take place in England, and that a priest might travel in a public coach, from one end of it to the other, without being the least likely to be so insulted by his fellow-passengers.

France is unquestionably advancing rapidly in physical and material civilization. It is impossible to travel through the country with an observant eye without being convinced of the fact. Her new roads in her more backward and hitherto neglected provinces, and improved roads throughout the kingdom ; her greatly-increased means of communication by the almost daily establishment of new competitors in the carrying business on the public roads, and the formation of new companies for the navigation by steam of rivers hitherto

profitless to commerce ; the almost daily commencement or completion of quays, bridges, and other public works, in almost every part of the country ; the cultivation of much hitherto uninclosed ground in many provinces, and the general establishment throughout the country of agricultural and industrial societies, are all manifest and easily-recognized proofs of the progress France is making in the various branches of material civilization.

The evidences of a nation's advancement or retrogression in moral and intellectual civilization do not lie quite so much on the surface of things, and are not by their nature so manifest to observation. But an observant traveller will not pass through the kingdom without finding many a straw, which will serve to indicate which way the wind is blowing in these respects also. And I saw, both in Paris and in the provinces, enough to convince me that the country is making as decided a progress towards moral barbarism, as it is towards physical civilization. The history of the world has amply proved that progress in the one of these directions is not incompatible with as rapid an advance in the other. It remains to be seen whether or not there is any necessary connection

between them ; and it is for England, as the most advanced nation of Europe, to discover for herself, and shew to others, how great a degree of material refinement and luxury mankind can endure, without its becoming the cause of dissolution of manners and moral retrogression.

This, however, has certainly not been the cause of the present low state of morality in France. It must be ascribed rather to that tremendous moral earthquake, of which the revolution was, in an ethical point of view, but the first and most violent shock, and which has not only torn up from men's minds all those ancient prejudices and superstitions, which constituted a safe though narrow tram-road for the conduct of a volatile and unthinking people to run on, but has unsettled and, in a great degree, destroyed more important and rational principles of action.

The most malignant symptom of this moral disease, which is destroying the nation, is the universal want of faith — not religious faith only, but of faith in any thing—in virtue, honesty, and morality—in the reality of any thing not cognizable by the material senses—in the government, in their superiors, in their neighbours, and in themselves. Every thing but the material interests of bodily com-

fort and well-being is spoken of in the same cold, sneering tone of sceptical ridicule, and the existence of any good, but that of sensual enjoyment, is deemed, at best, doubtful, and, therefore, unworthy of pursuit.

It requires but small penetration to perceive that such a temper of mind must lead to a degree of selfishness and *individualism*, which, as soon as ever it becomes sufficiently universal, must sever the bond which binds individuals into bodies politic, and dissolve society into its original elements.

Among a variety of small traits and indications of national feeling, which, as I said just now, serve as straws to shew which way the wind blows, many, though producing an impression at the moment of their occurrence which is not afterwards effaced, are themselves of a nature to slip from the memory. One unmistakable index, however, to the moral sentiments of a people, may be found in their newspapers and popular literature; and, throughout the whole of my tour through the provinces, I took considerable pains to ascertain what newspapers and books were the most read. The cafés and reading-rooms afforded me the means of judging of the first, and the contents of the circulating libraries, and the information of the keepers of them,

supplied a tolerably sure criterion of the latter.

The "Charivari" is, comparatively speaking, an expensive paper, and would not, therefore, be found in the smaller and poorer cafés. But, in those of more pretension, it was invariably taken, and was, as far as very constant and, I may say, very extensive observation could enable me to judge, more eagerly asked for, and more constantly in hand, than any other publication. The nature of this print is unfortunately too well known to make it necessary for me to characterise it with much particularity. It is written certainly not without much talent; but its staple contents are blasphemy, obscenity, and unceasing attacks on every species of existing institution, whether whig, tory, or radical. The church, the state, the law, the tribunals, the judges, the peers, the deputies, the ministers, be they whom they may, are all in turn assailed with its clever though somewhat monotonous ridicule. It is difficult to conceive the idea of a publication of a nature to be more extensively and deeply pernicious than the "Charivari."

The eminent success which has followed the establishment of this paper has brought into existence a crowd of imitators, such as "Le Corsaire," and others of the same stamp. They

are, for the most part, equally detestable, without being so cleverly written; and supply obscenity and blasphemy at a cheaper rate to those who cannot afford to take the *Charivari*. Their circulation, however, is far from being equal to that of their prototype.

Of regular newspapers, the "National," the "Siècle," and the "Presse," are those most commonly met with in the provinces over which I have travelled. The various shades of politics professed by these papers are sufficiently well known. In moral tone they are all, more or less, objectionable. The "feuilleton" of *Le Siècle* is generally supplied by some of the popular writers of fiction of the day; and to those who are in any degree acquainted with the current French literature of these times, that is saying quite enough. Some of the tales and romances, thus offered to thousands as their literary daily food, are, of course, less censurable than others; but the general tendency of them all is bad and demoralizing.

If, from the cafés, we turn to the circulating libraries, their contents of a nature equally pernicious, and little less ephemeral, amply confirm the conclusions we shall have been inclined to draw from the favourite sheets of the public press. The innumerable volumes

of Frederic Soulie, Paul de Kock, Eugene Sue, and Balzac, and a few others of similar character, constitute nearly their entire stock. And the mass of corrupt and corrupting ideas which address themselves to the passions, the imagination, and, occasionally, to the reasoning faculty throughout a series of works, not one of which any English father of a family would dream of suffering to enter his house, forms the daily and nightly reading of the young of both sexes.

I have been assured, in Paris, by Frenchmen, who appeared ashamed of the present national literature of their country, that these works were not generally read; that the productions, especially of the second of the above named authors, the most grossly indecent, perhaps, of all, were confined, in their circulation, to the porters, and water-carriers, etc., of Paris. It would be bad enough if it were so; but such is very far from being the case. These classes could not pay for the continual production of new works by many authors, or support the countless circulating libraries of Paris. But neither are these works confined to Parisian consumption. The poison is circulating actively through the smallest veins and remotest parts of the body of the state. And I cannot name any town in

France, out of the great number I have visited, so small, so remote, so isolated, so *backward*, as not to possess, at least, one circulating library, from whose stores — rich only in such works as these—the youth of France are nurtured. Each new accession to this “standard” literature is forthwith received from Paris. The glad tidings of its arrival are conspicuously placarded in immense posting-bills; and the young provincials hasten to devour the exciting food, which alone their minds, debilitated by similar reading, can relish, and strive to make themselves “*au courant du jour*” by being not one whit less corrupted than their Parisian contemporaries.

Upon one occasion, I was travelling in the diligence with the wife of a merchant, residing in one of the small towns of Auvergne. She had been to Paris for a few weeks to visit some friends, and was on her way back to Clermont, there to meet her husband. If it were possible to find in any part of France a spot which the poison disseminated from the capital had not reached, one might have expected to discover it among the mountains of Auvergne. And if any person, in any class of society, might be supposed to be, by position, secure from the almost universal cor-

ruption, it would surely be the young wife of a respectable merchant in a remote country town. I entered into conversation with her; and, in answer to my questions whether she was fond of reading, whether there were means of getting books where she lived, etc., etc., was very soon informed that she delighted in reading, read all the new novels as soon as they came out, but that her especially favourite author was Paul de Kock.

I had hoped that the deep-seated causes of profound demoralization, which I knew to exist in Paris, were confined to the capital, or, at least, to the larger cities of France. But my journeys through the provinces have amply convinced me, that any estimate of the state of the country, based on such a notion, would be eminently fallacious. It is useless to point out, as has frequently been done to me, when speaking to Frenchmen on the subject, individual cases of exception, which, nine times out of ten, occur in the family of some old Carlist, who regards the whole state of things with horror, and keeps himself and his family carefully aloof from all contact with the world around him. To cite the sound health of a family who had escaped the contagion of an infected city by keeping their doors scrupulously shut and hermetically sealed, as

a proof that the pestilence was not raging there, would not be more absurd.

The truth is, that the country is demoralized to an awful degree. Throughout the whole length and breadth of the land the plague-spot appears. The fountains of all morality and healthy feeling have been poisoned at their source, and it is, therefore, vain to expect the stream to run pure. The only part of the nation yet free from the wide-spread contagion is the peasantry, the rural labourers of the villages and scattered farms ; and they, alas ! are so only in exact proportion to the darkness of their ignorance.

Nothing can be farther from my intention than to advocate the continuance of this ignorance. Most dangerously precarious in its nature, and lamentably insufficient in its quality, must be the comparative innocence which results from the benighted condition of a large proportion of the French agricultural population. Yet such has been the nature of the enlightenment bestowed upon the people, that it results incontestably from statistical documents that those departments and communes of France are most free from crime in which *education* — as it is most erroneously termed—has made the least progress.

These departments are found in the exclusively agricultural districts in the centre of France. According to Dupin's exceedingly interesting tables and charts, the department of La Creuse is that in which the smallest proportion of the inhabitants can read and write; and it is also that in which crime, of every kind, is the least common.

One such fact as this is worth ten volumes of abstract theories. And what is the practical lesson to be drawn from it? Not that ignorance is good, as a preservative of innocence, but that a steam-engine Lancasterian process of turning out the greatest number of readers and writers in a given time is not education, and can lead, when unaccompanied by moral culture, only to a hothouse forcing of all that is bad in human nature, instead of implanting the seeds of good.

CHAPTER XXII.

Evening Walk—Place du Bouffay—Cours Saint Pierre—Fashionable Promenade—Cours Saint André—Statue of Louis XVI.—Of Breton Worthies—Military Parade—Young Soldiers—Drilling—Dislike of the Population of certain Provinces to the Service—Origin of the feeling—Different Races—Antipathy to the Service does not arise from want of Courage—Anecdote—A Perigordian Conscript and his Father.

THE serious subject upon which I was led to speak in the last chapter drew me far away from the dinner-table at the Hotel de l'Europe, at Nantes. There was nothing there to tempt me to carry the reader back to it; so let us suppose the business accomplished, and set forth on an after-dinner stroll, to enjoy the delicious temperature of the lovely evening, which had succeeded to a broiling day.

Having quitted the Isle Feydeau, by the Pont d'Aiguillon, I crossed the "Place du Bouffay," not without a thrilling recollection of all the horrors of which it was the scene in those terrible days, when the mother of "La Fille de la Puniton," and others like herself,

thronged it each morning, seeking, like foul beasts, their daily feast of blood ; and, passing along the “ quai de Port Maillard,” under the walls of the chateau, I turned up the “ Place Cincinnatus,” (!) and found myself on the “ Cours St. Pierre,” the principal promenade in the town.

Here I met all the beau monde of Nantes, assembled to enjoy the evening air, and listen to the band of a regiment, quartered in the town, which continued to play several popular airs, while the men were being drilled a little farther off in the “ Cours St. André”—another similar promenade ; a continuation, in fact, of the Cours St. Pierre, and separated from it only by a handsome “ place,” with a pillar and statue of Louis XVI. in the middle of it. These two promenades are farther decorated with statues of the Duchess Anné, and the three celebrated constables of France, Duguesclin, Oliver Clisson, and Arthur III., of Brittany, and duc de Richemont.

The regiment which was going through its exercise had been, for the most part, newly raised, and the young soldiers were being initiated into some of the rudiments of their military education. They were divided into a number of small bodies of about ten men in each, and were endeavouring, under the su-

perintendence and tuition of several veteran corporals, to acquire the rapidity and uniformity of motion and the exactitude of position, which constitute, on the parade, at least, a good soldier. The exceeding clumsiness of the great majority of them, and the reiterated repetition of the same plain instructions for the execution of a simple movement, without the smallest visible amelioration in the pupils' attempts, did not seem, as far as they went, to confirm the favourite boast of the French, that their countrymen are more easily and more rapidly turned into soldiers than those of any other nation.

I know not whether this regiment had been raised in the neighbourhood, but it is well known that the inhabitants of this part of France have an insuperable aversion to the military service. I have spoken before of the hatred the Bretons entertain for it, and of the extravagances they are occasionally led into by their despair at being drawn as conscripts. The same dislike exists in all the western and central provinces of France. And though, from the more modified and less energetic nature of the population, their feelings on the subject are rarely manifested in so violent and characteristic a manner as is frequently the case among the unmixed and

unchanged Celtic population of Western Brittany, yet the known fact of their dislike for the military life, and reluctance to quit their homes, is curious as a remaining trait of their once distinct nationality, and an evidence of that peculiar temperament, which can only be ascribed to their descent from a race differently constituted from the inhabitants of other parts of the kingdom. May we not also trace, in the readiness and alacrity with which the Normans and Alsacians enlist, the remains of that martial ardour, and love of enterprise and adventure, still fermenting in the hot blood transmitted through the generations of a thousand years from ancestors whom we know to have been so strongly characterised by the military spirit.

Not that the distaste, which the inhabitants of the western provinces evince for a military life, in any degree arises from want of courage, or even dislike of fighting. Far from it! Witness almost every page of the history of Brittany during its existence as an independent kingdom! Witness the burghers of La Rochelle, and the story of many another hardly-contested fort and field, during the period when so many of the men of these provinces were fighting against bigotry and oppression for religious liberty! Witness

more notably than all, the glorious struggle of the gallant peasants of La Vendée! No; it is a dislike, rather, to leave their homes, and to enter on a new and unwonted mode of life, and an unconquerable aversion to be submitted to all the irksome details of a soldier's discipline, and that too, under superiors they have never known, strangers alike, in all probability, to their habits, manners, and country.

Though, as I have said, it does not ordinarily happen that the conscripts of Anjou, Poitou, Limousin, Perigord, etc., fall into that excess of grief and despondency which has frequently proved fatal to those of Brittany, yet tragical occurrences, from time to time, take place, which mark, in a sufficiently strong and striking manner, their hatred of the service and their anxiety to escape from it. A very remarkable case in point occurred while I was in France, at the village of Savignac-les-eglises, near Perigueux, which the newspapers noticed at the time.

A young peasant, the only son of his parents, was drawn. He was a very fine young man, and a very good son; and the family, though the father was but a common labourer, enjoyed a high degree of consideration in his native village; for the old couple had spent

there nearly the whole of a long life of honesty and industry. When the fatal result of the lottery was known, the young man's agony was extreme. The duty before him was hateful enough to his own feelings; but the necessity of leaving his aged parents, and the task of conveying to them the heavy news, made the prospect he had to face black indeed. It must, however, be done; and with a heavy heart he returned to his father's cottage, and told, as he best might, his news. The parents were inconsolable. In vain he spoke to them, with a cheerfulness he did not feel, of his return, and attempted to view the calamity on its brighter side. Life was to them henceforward but a dreary blank, and they could only look forward to dying while he was far away, at best, with none but strangers around their bed—perhaps in the desolation of unattended solitude.

When the first paroxysm of their grief had in some measure subsided, every possibility of escape from the impending doom was canvassed by the dejected party. In vain! It was inevitable. The whole property which the family could scrape together by selling every possession they had in the world, would fall far short of the sum necessary to procure a substitute. The poor mother fell on her son's

neck in a fresh burst of grief, while the grey-headed old man stood aloof and gazed on the pair with an eye in which a stony, immoveable, and unnatural composure had taken the place of the expression of uncontrolled despair.

“This,” said he, at length, “is my doing. It is impossible now to purchase a substitute, but I might have saved enough, if I had begun early enough, to have paid the insurance against conscription. I trusted to chance what I ought by my own industry to have secured, and I am punished. But God, my son, does not will that you and your aged mother should suffer for my fault. He wills not that you should quit her and this roof; and,” raising his voice, and speaking with impressive solemnity, “you will not quit it. It is your father who tells you so!”

This speech produced no great impression upon the mother or son. The belief in supernatural warnings and presentiments is very common among the more ignorant of the French peasants, and on an ordinary occasion such a prediction as the old man had just uttered would not have been altogether disregarded. But the hearts of the unfortunate conscript and his mother were too deeply miserable to be relieved by such slenderly-sustained hope. The night was passed by

them in weeping and lamentation; for the French peasant, like the Irish, is ever demonstrative and noisy in his grief.

The old man, however, preserved his stiff and cold tranquillity; and in the morning, after renewing his declaration that God would find a means of escape for his son, and bidding adieu affectionately to his wife and boy, he left the house, saying that he was going to the tribunal, whose business it is to superintend the drawing for the conscription, to consult the judges upon the matter.

The young man shook his head, and began afresh his fruitless endeavours to console his mother, while his father left them and proceeded to the tribunal.

Arrived before the authorities, he of course received in answer to all he could urge the assurance that the lot had fallen regularly and legitimately on his son; that it was the duty of every Frenchman to be ready at a moment's notice to serve his country, &c., and that he must be ready to depart with the other conscripts.

“But there are exceptions,” still urged the old man, “many exceptions; all are not liable to the conscription; and perhaps it may be found that my son——”

“There can be no exception in your son's

case, old man!" interrupted the magistrate, rather angry at the peasant's pertinacity. "He has been legally drawn, and he must serve. There is no help for it."

"But is not the only son of a widow exempted by the law?" still persisted the old man. "I have heard say that the conscription spares such."

"Certainly it does. But what is that to you!" said the magistrate; "that is not your son's case; and is not likely to be, as far as I can judge; for you look as hearty an old fellow as one could wish to see. Come! come! make up your mind to it at once!—for go he must."

"He will *not* go," replied the old man, calmly and slowly, "for he *is* the only son of his mother, and she *is* a widow."

And at the same instant he put to his temple the muzzle of a pistol, which he had drawn from the concealment of his blouse as he uttered the last words, and fell before them a corpse.

It is needless to attempt a description of the effect produced upon the presiding magistrates and the spectators by this unexpected catastrophe. The young man had indeed become entitled to the benefit of the exception accorded by the law to the only son

of a widow ; but it may be doubted how far the house of mourning, which the determined old man had left never to return to it, would be comforted, when the young conscript's liberation from the hated duty, and the price which had been paid for it, were communicated to the son and widow of the suicide.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ungallant Band — Botanical Garden — Logical Classification of Plants—View from the Promenade—Cemetery de Miséricorde—Legend—Rue de l'Entrepot — Fine Line of Streets — Church of Nôtre Dame—Anecdote — Jean de Montfort's Three Vows, and how he kept them — New Quarter of the City — M. Grasliu—Literary Nomenclatures of the Nantais Streets—The Theatre—The Audience—Return to hotel—and Departure from Nantes.

I CONTINUED lounging on the promenade, sometimes walking down the hill, on the Cours St. Pierre, on the south side of Louis XVI.'s pillar, to look at all the gay Nantais and Nantaises who had come there to see and to be seen, and sometimes on the Cours St. André, on the north side of the pillar, to see if the recruits were getting on, and holding up their heads a little better, till the band ceased playing. They were stationed in the "Place Louis XVI., between the two promenades, so as to serve at the same time to excite the awkward squad to military ardour, and amuse the beau monde of Nantes with their music. I am obliged, however, to infer, however painful it may be to draw a conclu-

sion so unfavourable to the gallantry of the officers of the regiment in question, that the first of these objects was the only one they had in view; for as soon as ever the unpromising young men who were going through the painful process of being made to turn out their toes at their eighteenth or twentieth years of age, after having turned them in all their lives, had arrived at the end of their lesson, and began scampering off in all directions like a flock of boys turned out of a village-school, the band immediately packed up their instruments, and marched off with bag and baggage.

I followed their example, and directed my course towards the botanical garden, which I had been told was a very fine one. It is situated not very far from the promenade, a little to the eastward of it, on the outskirts of the town. It was evidently a recent establishment, and had been laid out, as perhaps a botanical garden ought to be, without the slightest regard to beauty or pleasing effect of any kind. Yet I regretted not my pains in having quitted the gay and festive scene of the promenade to visit it; for though I was unable to appreciate the rarity or excellence of the various plants exhibited there, my inspection afforded me a more superlatively exquisite

example of logical division, than it could ever have entered the head of Doctors Aristotle or Aldrich to conceive.

A placard, affixed to a pole erected in the garden, exhibited five coloured streaks of black, blue, yellow, green, and red, together with the information that each of these colours painted on the label attached to each plant in the garden signified respectively that the said plant appertained to one of the five following classes.

1st. Poisonous Plants!

2nd. Medicinal!!

3rd. Ornamental!!!

4th. Used for food or in cookery!!!!

5th. Used in the Arts!!!!!!

Under which head, I wonder, would the Nantais savants range the laurel? Poisonous? That it certainly is.

Medicinal?—Prussic acid decidedly vindicates for the laurel a place in this department.

Ornamental?—Shades of Le Notre and Capability Brown! What would ye feel were the evergreen laurel decided to be no longer ornamental!

Used for food or in cookery?—What is a custard good for without the flavour the laurel leaf imparts!

Used in the arts?—Many an academician is of opinion that the arts would be more flourishing if the laurel was made use of in them—or on the artists, it is the same thing—a little oftener.

I quitted the garden after I had culled from it this delicious specimen of classification, and returning to the Cours, walked to the northern extremity of the Cours St. André, from which a considerable part of the town and the course of the Erdre are looked down on. These promenades must have been constructed on the rampart which shut the original city into the corner formed by the junction of the Erdre and the Loire. The south end of the Cours St. Pierre, accordingly, looks upon the Loire, and the north end of the Cours St. André on the Erdre. A good deal of the height of the rampart remains in this part, and is ascended by steps. The Erdre, however, whose stream is here made use of by the canal from Brest to Nantes, is so built up with houses, and covered with bridges, as to be very little seen.

Descending from the rampart, and crossing the Erdre by one of its numerous bridges, I passed an immense “abattoir,”—conveniences subsidiary to health and cleanliness, which ought, ere now, to have been added to

our list of improvements—and, still walking in a north-westerly direction, soon came to the large cemetery “de Misericorde,” on the extreme outskirts of the town. There is a long “Rue de Misericorde,” and a “chemin de misericorde,” leading to the “Chapelle de Misericorde,” which used, in old times, to be a very favourite place of devotion with the Nantais. The foundation of this chapel is of very great antiquity, being placed by the historians of the town in the fifth century.

It is said to have been originally built to commemorate the victory which three knights obtained over a dragon, who inhabited the forest that then covered the country to the north of the town. Three knights to one unfortunate dragon! What would that gallant Yorkshireman, More, of More Hall, who, “with nothing at all, slew the dragon of Wantley,” have said to such odds? However, the Nantais dragon devoured one of his three opponents, but was slain by the two others, who carried his body in triumph to the cathedral, where it was graciously received by the Bishop, who caused the lower jaw to be detached from the monster’s head and enclosed in a silver box. This was lodged among the treasures of the cathedral, where, say the Nantais, it was still to be seen in 1773.

The Chapelle de Misericorde had handsome painted windows, on which was represented the combat of the three knights, together with the following curious inscription, which, with the popular tradition, constituted the only record of the event.

“ Un roi dessus un blanc cheval
Tira l'arc pour faire mal.
Un autre, sur un cheval roux,
Tire l'épée, tout en courroux,
L'autre, sur un cheval noir,
Vit la mort et l'inferral ma noir.”

The use of the word “ roi ” in these lines is worthy of remark. The rhymes, as they stand here, are of course not of the period they refer to. They were doubtless written according to the mode in vogue at the time when the Chapelle de Misericorde was adorned with its painted window, but, in all probability, repeated the tradition accurately, and as nearly as the alteration of language would permit in the words in which it had been handed down from generation to generation.

From the cemetery I found my way southwards to the top of a handsome street, planted with an avenue of trees, called the “ Rue de l'Entrepot,” which I descended. At the bottom of it is the large building from which it takes its name. And from this point, run-

ning in an easterly direction at right angles, or nearly so, with the Rue de l'Entrepot, is a handsome series of streets, leading in a straight line to the Place Royal, on the other side of which is the old part of the town. This street, or rather these streets, for though the same line is preserved, it is called by various names, is parallel to the quays which I had traversed this morning, and equally conducted me towards my quarters, which the darkening twilight reminded me it was nearly time to reseek.

In the first of these streets is the church of Nôtre Dame, the next in importance to the cathedral. The edifice has, however, nothing remarkable in it; but I was amused by the following anecdote from the archives of its history.

When the duke Jean de Montfort was Marguerite de Clisson's prisoner in her castle of Champtoceaux, as has been before mentioned, he made a vow that, if ever he should be so fortunate as to escape from that violent-tempered old lady's clutches, he would perform these three works of piety and devotion. In the first place, he would give to the church of Nôtre Dame in Nantes his own weight of gold, and to that of St. Yves a similar weight of silver. Secondly, he undertook to make a

pilgrimage to the holy land. Thirdly, he promised never more to levy any taxes on his subjects.

He vowed a vow; and in process of time he did escape from Dame Margaret's durance vile. But, though he kept his promises in some sort, as the reader shall hear, he can hardly be said, like that admirable example of fidelity and devotion, the Turk's daughter, in the instructive poem, intituled "the loving Ballad of Lord Bateman and the fair Sophia," to have "kept them *strong*."

The duke, on his escape, first turned his attention to the gifts promised to our Lady's shrine and that of St. Yves. It was certainly expedient that this part of his obligation should be attended to immediately, for it may easily be supposed that the lady Margaret's prison diet had left him in a condition to acquit himself of this portion of his vow more cheaply than he could at any other time. So he weighed himself forthwith, and found that he fairly balanced three hundred and eighty mares and seven ounces, which made about three hundred and twenty thousand francs of the present currency for Nôtre Dame, and twenty-two thousand francs for St. Yves. And this he truly and honestly paid.

The next thing to be considered was the

pilgrimage to the holy land. This was very easily settled ; for though it would have been exceedingly inconvenient for him to have quitted his dominions just then, matters were arranged without difficulty by his paying a substitute for performing the pilgrimage in his place.

The third article of his promise remained—to refrain from ever more imposing any contributions upon his people. It was by far the most difficult part of the affair, and the duke was rather puzzled. He could not conceive how he ever could have been rash enough to make so monstrous a vow. It was so very incompatible, too, with the performance of the other parts of his promise, and in every point of view so exceedingly inconvenient ! Sure never prince made, under the circumstances, so ill-judged and injudicious a vow before ! But we know that

“ When the devil was sick, the devil a monk would be ;
But when the devil got well, the devil a monk was he ! ”

However, a vow is a vow, and must be disposed of in some way. What was to be done ? In all such cases there is ever one unfailing and infallible resource for true and faithful sons of the church of Rome, and obedient servants of her pontiff. The duke laid his distressing case before the Holy Father, who

expressed his strong sympathy for the disagreeable predicament in which his pious son had incautiously placed himself, and generously accorded him his paternal dispensation from that unprofitable part of his vow — on receipt of a remittance of twenty thousand florins, which the well-pleased Duke forthwith raised by the imposition of new taxes, together with as much more, when he was about it, for his own immediate necessities.

And thus Jean de Montfort's three vows, if not altogether "kept strong," were discharged, to the perfect ease and tranquillity of his own conscience, and the entire satisfaction, doubtless, of all parties concerned.

Quitting the church of Nôtre Dame, and passing by the "Hotel des Monnaies," a large building, of no architectural beauty, I soon reached the Place Graslin, named after a wealthy "fermier general," who, towards the latter part of the last century, was the principal projector and builder of all this quarter of the town. This "place" is in the form of a Norman arch, of which the theatre, a handsome modern building, adorned with several statues surmounting its principal façade, forms the base. M. Graslin has left, as it should seem, a record of his literary tastes in the

names of the surrounding streets. Next to the theatre are appropriately placed the Rues Corneille and Molière ; and, in the neighbourhood, those of Voltaire, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Racine, Rubens, Franklin, Crebillon, Copernic, Cassini, Petrarque, Boileau, Descartes, Fourcroy, Piron, Gretry, La Fontaine, Le Sage, Montesquieu, Marivaux, &c.

From the Place Graslin I turned into the Rue Piron, which, as I ought to have expected, I found dirty and dark. It led me sadly astray, moreover, and, before I could get clear of the learned labyrinth in which I found myself entangled, it was dark. At last, however, I rambled back into the Place Graslin, and there, finding myself before the open door of the theatre, I walked into the pit, " moyennant " something about thirty sous.

What the performances consisted of this deponent saith not. I am, however, able to give a somewhat better account of the audience. There were about a dozen " habitué " - looking men in the same division of the pit with myself — genuine Frenchmen — " petits rentiers," probably, or employés in some of the innumerable government offices — men who subscribe to the theatre by the season,

and to whom "le spectacle" is a far more pressing daily "besoin" than a dinner, and almost as much so as their "tabatière" and "demi-tasse de café." In the backward division of the pit were about a similar number of private soldiers. In the centre box of the lower tier sat, in solitary dignity, a very stout, white-headed old gentleman, in a general's uniform, who, from time to time, yawned portentously. A thin sprinkling of officers, together with not more than a dozen elegant extracts, male and female, from the Nantais beau monde, were scattered over the other boxes of the same tier. And in the row above, immediately over the old general's head, in the exact centre of the circle, sat a solitary gend'arme, with his cocked hat on his head, his chin on his thumbs, and his elbows on the rail in front of him.

The whole of the house was in an incredibly filthy state, and I soon left it, thinking that I had seen enough to warrant me in coming to the conclusion that the drama does not flourish at Nantes.

I groped my way home through streets that could hardly be said to be lighted at all; and having charged both the "garçon" and "fille de chambre" to call me without fail

at half past four o'clock the next morning, I mounted to my room, to prepare every thing for leaving Nantes the next morning, and make the best of a somewhat short night.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Journey to Clisson — The Capital of La Vendée — The two Sèvres — Their different Characters — French Guide-Books — Touching Anecdote respecting a Plaster-cast Merchant—Scenery of Clisson — Destruction of the Town in the War — Traces of the War in La Vendée—New Villages—Destruction of the Vendéean Villages — Retreats and Hiding-places of the Inhabitants — “ Le Refuge” — The Castle of Clisson — Its Architecture — Its present State — The Constable Oliver Clisson — The brothers Caucault—Their History—Their Museum—Their Gardens—Anecdote of the Vendéean War.

I LEFT Nantes at five o'clock in the morning, by a little voiture, carrying four persons inside, and one in front, with the driver, which was bound for Clisson, a little chef lieu de Canton, about ten leagues to the south, on the extreme verge of the department. Its natural beauties, and interesting historical associations, together with the unusual circumstance of a little country village, such as Clisson, having possessed an extensive collection of pictures, open to the public, and some pretty pleasure-grounds around the building which contained them, have made it

a celebrated place in this part of the country, and a favourite resort of Nantais pleasure-parties. Under these circumstances, I must needs have visited Clisson, even if it had not fallen in with my proposed route; but, as it happens, it is situated in the way leading to the bocage of La Vendée, not far out of the great road to Bourbon, the capital of the department, and thus exactly in my course.

My three fellow-travellers in the little voiture were all Vendéean farmers of the bocage, returning from Nantes to their homes. For the latter city is, in fact, to all intents and purposes, the capital of La Vendée. Before the revolution and the division of France into departments, this district formed part of the province of Poitou, and Poitiers was, therefore, legally, its metropolis. Now, the town of Bourbon Vendée is its recognized capital. But, both before and since that great change, the habits of the people, from time immemorial, were stronger than the geographical arrangements of the law, and neither Poitiers nor Bourbon have ever been more than in name the capital town of the Vendéans. Whether it was that Nantes was more conveniently situated, or that it offered better markets, or, possibly, that the political feelings of the Nantais accorded better with those

of the Vendéens than the politics of Poitiers ; from whatever cause it may have arisen, all the communication which the villages of La Vendée and the scattered population of the bocage require with the city, is invariably maintained with Nantes. With the exception of an extensive view from the top of a hill, about half way between Nantes and Clisson, the route is not particularly interesting. The country is chiefly occupied with vineyards, whose produce was, last year, worth sixty francs the piece.

About a couple of leagues, or so, before arriving at Clisson, the road passes close to the small village of Palet, the birth-place of Peter Abelard. The local antiquaries and guide-books maintain that the ruins of his father Berenger's house are still in existence, and to be seen at Palet. But it distresses me to be obliged to say that I deem this fact of a very apochryphal nature.

We arrived at Clisson about ten o'clock ; and all descended from the carriage to descend the extremely steep hill, which dips down to the village—town, perhaps, the Clissonians would call it—on the banks of the Sèvre Nantais. There are two rivers in this neighbourhood called Sèvre, from which the adjoining department of “ Les Deux Sèvres ” is

named. La Vendée lies almost entirely between them, La Sèvre Nantais passing along its eastern and northern frontier, and falling into the Loire, opposite to Nantes; and the Sèvre Niortaise—so called from the town of Niort—the capital of “Les deux Sèvres”—forming its southern boundary, and falling into the ocean. It is impossible for two rivers to present a greater contrast to each other than do these sister Sèvres. She, of Nantes, the northern stream, is a laughing, sparkling, active, noisy, boisterous, giddy nymph, rattling along at a jovial pace over her rocky path, and dashing, flashing, and splashing about at the bottom of her deep, narrow valley, not quite like *Lowdore*, but in a very sprightly manner. Her southern namesake, of Niort, on the contrary, solemnly, sulkily, sleepily, and slowly pursues her dull, still way, and skulks into the sea, amid sands and marshes, as if anxious to make off unseen, with the stolen spoils of the rich, loamy meadows, with which she is laden.

Clisson is niched into a narrow ravine, through which dances along the gayer and more attractive of these contrasted twins, and is, certainly, an extremely picturesque spot. But the good people of Nantes, in their local partiality for this favourite haunt, know no bounds to their ecstasies and enthusiasm of

admiration. Guide-books, histories, and descriptions, poems, in quarto, octavo, duodecimo, and lithographed views of scenery innumerable, have been published; and, by their account, "there is not in the wide world a valley" half so sweet as that of the *Sèvre*. One author gravely remonstrates with Frenchmen for being so unpatriotic as to leave their country in search of scenery beyond the Alps, when here, at home, they have landscapes "which yield, in no respect, to the most lovely sites in Switzerland and Italy." A temple of *Vesta* has been built there; and the case of an Italian image-boy is recorded, who, on passing the spot by chance, was so overcome by the emotions this exact fac-simile of his native village produced in his bosom, that he could only stretch forth his arms and cry, "*Tivoli! Tivoli!*" before he fell to the ground in a swoon. The recorder of this touching anecdote has not stated how it fared with the poor Italian's board of images at this interesting crisis, but there is great reason to fear that it must have gone hard with them. Let us hope that the delighted witness of the affecting occurrence pulled out a five franc piece, and presented it to the victim of patriotism to replace his broken wares.

Were it not that the exaggerated praises of

these very French Guide-books prepare disappointment for the traveller, and beget in him the inclination to pick holes in the charms which have been so outrageously over-stated, Clisson, and the neighbouring scenery of the Sèvre, could not fail to delight the most fastidious critic. A little stream, called the Moine, falls into the Sèvre at this point, and varies the shape of the ground picturesquely, by the addition of its own little valley. The village itself is, from its raw and new appearance, less calculated to adorn the landscape than might have been expected. In fact, the traveller begins here to see the traces of the tremendous struggle which desolated this country twice over at the close of the last and beginning of the present century.

The village of Clisson was almost entirely destroyed, and was not rebuilt till some time afterwards. The devastated fields around it, trampled, burned, and wasted, as were the corps, and strewn, as was the soil, with all the scathing vestiges of war, have again assumed an aspect of peaceful industry and plenteous increase; and the luxurious herbage has covered the hideous scars inflicted on earth's bosom by the violence of civil strife. But the bounty of nature effaces man's mar-ring of her works more rapidly than he can

repair the mischief his fury wreaks upon the creations of his own hands. And the dreadful sufferings this unfortunate country endured will be marked on its surface for yet many a year by the ugly, formal, bright-coloured, unfinished-looking villages, which seem, by some strange metamorphosis, to have been transplanted from amongst the wilds and forests of some newly-settled colony into the midst of the ancient cultivation and immemorial hedge-rows of the old world. It is true, the patient labours of peace have re-laid the hearthstones, and once more raised the roofs which the drunkenness of war had desecrated and thrown down. But these are no longer *native* villages. Where are the time-stricken cottages, each, to their several inmates, hallowed into *homes*, by the sacred ties of a thousand linked associations of family joys and sorrows; the well-remembered furniture; the infant's cradle, in which the father himself, too, slept, when an infant; the chamber in which a son has closed his father's eyes; or the chair first purchased years ago, or constructed by himself, perhaps, for the comfort of an aged mother? These things are the family archives of the rustic villager; and the reminiscences attached to them, connecting him retrospectively and prospectively with

his kind, are potent agents of good, and safeguards of real civilization. But all these are swept away!

Where, too, is the village churchyard, with its still more holy associations? The graves of their fathers, so sacred in the eyes of these religious peasants; and the hallowed spot, whose carefully-tended turf had been so often pressed by their knees, while their prayers mingled with solemn anticipations of the day when their own forms should be laid to rest with the venerated dust beneath? Where, too, in many instances, is the village church itself, that storehouse of the hopes and fears of so many simple hearts, the ancient point of union and bond of fellowship of the little community around it, whose fondly-revered fabric entered so largely into each man's idea of home? Desecrated! despoiled! devastated! gone! Yes; material nature may bloom again, as fair or fairer than before; labour may recover its losses, and thriving industry forget the destroyed wealth of its former content in newly-born prosperity. But many a generation must pass away before *La Vendée* can, if ever, really recover from the effects of the devouring fire which has passed over it, or assume, even to the careless eye of

a superficial observer, the external appearance of its former self.

The generality of English readers are, probably, not aware of the degree to which this devoted land was laid waste, and, in many parts, even depopulated by the too celebrated Vendéean wars. Many villages, and that of Clisson among the number, were utterly deserted and left desolate. The scattered population dared not venture back to look at the sad spectacle of their ruined homes: and the country around them rapidly assumed the appearance of a wilderness, whose former population had migrated, in a mass, to other lands.

The sudden summons ran through the village like lightning, "The Blues! the Blues!" together with the appointed spot where one of their almost adored and implicitly-obeyed leaders and seigneurs would meet them, passed from mouth to mouth. Each man caught his musket, or, more frequently, his fowling-piece, from the wall, said a few hasty words of adieu and instruction, in case of the worst, to his family, and hurried singly and by devious paths to the place of rendezvous. There, the orders for the business in hand were quickly given; an ambuscade, probably, to be laid behind the shelter of their enormous hedges,

in a spot where it was known the Blues were to pass. The moment for the assault came, a deadly fire was opened on the confused soldiers, and, at the well-known command, "*egaillez vous mes gars*" — "scatter yourselves, my boys!"—long the only word of command in use among the Vendéean armies, the peasants dispersed in every direction into the thickets, along the hedge-rows, or among the dense gorse bushes, and were, in a minute, beyond all possibility of pursuit or retaliation. But, if the plans of his leader required his presence for a longer period, no pressure of want, no excess of fatigue, no anxiety for the fate of those he had left behind at home, no imminence of danger, could seduce the untrained, unmilitary Vendéean peasant from his post. Night or day, wet or dry, nourished as he could find the means, or to the very extent of nature's power of endurance—and often beyond it—not nourished at all, he dreamed not of returning to his home till his leader gave the word.

And then, when cautiously he approached his village across the fields and commons, it frequently occurred that he found it a smouldering mass of ruins, strewn around, perhaps, with the corpses of the murdered old men, women, and children, who, in the absence of

every arm capable of bearing a musket, had been its only occupants ; or, at all events, deserted by every living creature, silent as death, and desolate. And in this state many of the villages remained till the final pacification of the country. The moss began to grow on the blackened and prostrate timbers ; the grass covered alike the streets and the fallen thatched roofs ; and the luxuriant rank vegetation, thriving on the process of decay, was rapidly converting the remains of the entire village into one undistinguishable mass of ruins.

If the miserable inhabitants had been fortunate enough to get notice of the approach of the Blues in time to effect their escape from their dwellings, their usual resource was the shelter of the gorse. This plant, as I had before remarked to be the case in Brittany, grows throughout the bocage of La Vendée to a very great height, and in the greatest profusion. There are whole fields of it growing to the height of ten or twelve feet, and so thick as to be almost impenetrable. Nothing could be better adapted for concealment. In hiding-places, ingeniously constructed in the centre of these masses of vegetation, and most cautiously approached, the inhabitants of entire villages have lain concealed.

But the most notable asylum of the Vendéean women and children, and such of the men as were not absent on expeditions, was a regular sylvan city, which was called "Le Refuge." This was situated in the heart of the thick forest of Grâla, which stretches over a considerable space of country, some leagues to the southward of Clisson. This place of concealment was first resorted to in 1793, and for a long time proved a secure asylum for a very great number of Vendéean families, whose villages were destroyed. A great number of huts, constructed of branches and sods of turf, were arranged in regular streets. A larger shed was erected for a church; and the proscribed community lived in their sylvan city in peace, waiting for happier and better times. There are old couples still living who were married in this woodland retreat; for it may be easily imagined that there was no lack of priests at Le Refuge, seeing that the hottest persecution was directed against ecclesiastics who refused to submit their consciences to the dictation of an atheist government. Many Vendéean, too, are still living, who first saw the light under the leafy roofs of the cabins of Le Refuge.

The forest of Grâla was, of course, deserted by its temporary inmates as soon as the com-

plexion of the times permitted them to return to their fields, and rebuild their villages. And but small traces now remain of the little city it once harboured in its bosom.

When Clisson was destroyed by the republican forces, there was, however, one morsel too tough for them. This was the old castle. Its majestic ruins finely crown a rocky eminence on the opposite side of the valley to that by which I entered the village, and still, though dismantled, frown in gloomy feudal dignity and scorn upon the new, rickety-looking buildings beneath it.

This castle, in the days of its pride, must have been a place of immense strength, and all but impregnable. Its walls, more than sixteen feet thick, were cannon-proof; and the fortifications of the principal entrance, together with the combinations of means for offensive operations against a besieging party, are considered to be arranged with peculiar skill. It is said, indeed, that the whole architecture of this side of the castle is an exact copy of a portion of the Saracenic fortress of Cesarea.

But little remains of the interior. A few arches, rent and ivy-grown, one or two towers hanging over the precipitous side of the rock, which seem to hold together and retain their

threatening position only from long habit, some narrow windows, two dungeons, one underneath the other, cut in the rock, with the judgment-chamber above them, and the walls surrounding the two courts, are all that remain of the patrimonial dwelling of the redoubtable Constable, Oliver Clisson. One of the poets of this favoured spot says, or sings, of this castle,

“ Casques et boucliers, cuirasses gigantesques,
 Cris d’armes, mots d’amour, devises de l’honneur,
 Cartels pour l’infidèle, ou pour le suborneur,
 Tout garde sur ces murs vraiment chevaleresques
 La memoire d’un siècle où l’épée, où la foi,
 Où la galanterie étaient la seule loi.”

However all this may apply to the old walls, I fear that their most notable possessor, the redoubtable Oliver, was by no means a model of a preux chevalier. As far as being very brave and bloody-minded goes, he was unexceptionable. But his courage seems to have been of the bull-dog sort; and in other respects, though he certainly rendered great service to the cause of Charles de Blois, whose quarrel he espoused against de Montfort, history represents him as a veritable curmudgeon.

The finest thing about the castle, as it now stands, is one of the bastions, from which there is a very striking view of the valley of

the Sèvre, and the pleasure-grounds and plantations which were made by the brothers Cacault. These brothers may be regarded as the founders of the present town of Clisson, for, under their auspices, and by their assistance, it was rebuilt after its destruction in 1793. And the extensive grounds which their taste and wealth created are, with the generality of visitors, the chief lion of the place.

Pierre Cacault was originally a painter of Nantes. But he must apparently have been a man of fortune also. His brother Alexander was, during the French republic, ambassador at Rome. Pierre, returning thence shortly after the war in La Vendée, was one of the first persons who ventured into this part of the Bocage since its desolation. He found it literally a wilderness—the ruins of a town overgrown with rushes and brambles, and not a single human being, or a sign or sound of life, near the abandoned spot. He was, nevertheless, delighted with the scenery of the environs, established himself, with a few necessaries, in the ruins of a half-burned house, and set to work with his pencils and brushes. In a day or two, so goes the tale, he became so charmed with the beauties of the place, all disfigured and ruined as it was,

that he determined to fix his future residence there. Gradually he succeeded in inducing the old inhabitants to venture back to their former dwellings, and by degrees to rebuild their town. He himself persuaded his brother to join him there ; and together they built themselves a handsome house, and, moreover, a large museum to hold the extensive collection of pictures they had brought home with them from Italy. These they always threw open to the public ; and the great concourse of persons who were attracted to Clisson to visit them contributed not a little to the reviving prosperity of the town.

This is the tale as it is told. Whether there may have been aught else to tell, or whether any other motives may have cooperated with the love of scenery, to induce the republican ex-ambassador and his brother to have fixed their abode amid the deserted homes of the defeated royalists, must be left to the guesses of the ingenious. At all events, it is certain that they were great benefactors to the place. Their collection of pictures was eventually in part carried to Nantes, where it formed the nucleus of the present public gallery of that town, and the remainder was dispersed. The grounds they laid out on the sloping side of the valley of the Sèvre are

still, however, to be seen, and, though in some degree injured in the visitor's eyes by the ridiculously exaggerated eulogiums of their Nantais admirers, are, it must be admitted, exceedingly pretty gardens, and as pleasant a summer lounging-place as a lover of Nature "en grande toilette" could desire.

I had satisfied myself with gazing over the valley, and was turning to quit the castle, when the old woman who had acted as my cicerone put her hand upon my arm, saying—

"Il y a encore quelque chose à voir, qu'il ne faut pas oublier. Venez par ici."

I followed her into the second court, and we advanced towards a few cypress trees which had been planted in one part of it. The old woman knelt down for a few moments, and, crossing herself as she rose from her knees, said, in a constrained and unnaturally calm and quiet sort of voice—

"Il y a sous ce gazon quatre cents et cinq Vendéens, femmes, enfants, et vieillards!"

"Comment! enterrés la!" I cried.

"Enterrés! Non pas! non pas! . . . jetés! jetés tout vivants!" returned the old woman, having now lost her stoicism; "entassés pêle-mêle les uns sur les autres! Grand Dieu! c'était un puits!"

Such, in truth, is the last page of the history of these old walls. Upwards of four hundred Vendéens, all old men, women, and children, inhabitants of Clisson, had hid themselves in the large building, less ruinous than it is now, which forms the western side of the court. They had lain concealed there for some days, when a few wreaths of smoke, escaping from the top of the building, betrayed them to a portion of Kleber's army, who were in possession of the town. Their doom was sealed, for the republicans never spared blood that might be spilt.

There seems something awful and beyond the common course of nature, bad enough as that often is, in the degree to which the French republicans, who had publicly and deliberately denied the existence of their God, were permitted to sink below the level of humanity, and become degraded into ferocious monsters, to whom the purposeless, useless slaughter of their species was a pleasure.

These men compelled the unfortunate wretches, whom they had hunted out, to pass from their retreat into the court by a little doorway, which may still be seen, and there flung them, living, one after another, into the castle-well. Upwards of four hundred were thus thrown in, and the large and deep well

was nearly filled. It has been since built over ; and some pious hand has planted a few cypress-trees upon the spot. No memorial of the deed has been raised. But it is unnecessary. For generations, whose sires are yet unborn, will tell in La Vendée of Clisson castle-well, and the deed there done by the men who denied their God and murdered their king.

END OF VOL. I.

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