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A SUMMER
IN
WESTERN FRANCE.

VOL. II.

ADOLPHUS TROLOPE F.R.S.E.

ADOLPHUS TROLOPE F.R.S.E.

FRANCIS TROLOPE



Hervieu

CONNAISSANCES UTILES

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OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

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A SUMMER
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THERE is a good little inn at Clisson, which can supply the traveller with a very good breakfast, as I can testify; or dinner, as I doubt not. But I cannot resist quoting the words in which this agreeable intelligence is communicated by a French writer on the delights of Clisson. “Les voyageurs,” says he,

“ retrouvent a Clisson les temples d’Epicure placés à côté des bosquets de Paphos ; ce sont les voluptés de Baies au milieu de toutes les graces que la Nature étale à Tivoli. Le pain y est tout aussi beau qu’à Paris,” &c.

The day was nearly gone when I turned my back on all these varied charms, and, having despatched my baggage to Bourbon, set out to walk along the banks of the Sèvre, intending to fix my quarters for the night according to circumstances. I have already described the character of the stream whose windings I was now following ; and if to that, it be added that the steep sides of the valley are sometimes covered with wood, sometimes with flowering gorse, and sometimes with masses of grey, moss-grown rock, that several paper-mills detract as much from the beauty of the valley by the ugliness of their edifices, as their picturesque weirs—which in the guide-books swell into “ magnifique cascades ”—add to it ; and that here and there, nestling under the side of the hill, are little knots of cottages inhabited by the workmen employed in these manufactories, the reader will be able to form a tolerably accurate idea of the scenery of this pretty river.

I enjoyed my walk much, but was not suf-

ficiently enchanted with the river, and its woods, weirs, rocks, and gorse-bushes, to wish to pass the night among them; and the sun was nearing the horizon. I found that, by following the capricious course of the Sèvre, I was making very little progress in any direction; so I deemed it expedient to quit the river, and strike across the fields to the left, in which quarter I was told I should find a highroad leading to Torfou. It was not long before I fell into it near the village of Boussay, and then, changing the lazy, strolling pace in which I had indulged while finding my way along the river bank, for a good brisk walk, I soon found myself in the village of Torfou.

Here, as well as at Boussay, all is new. Not an old house is to be seen. For this immediate neighbourhood was among those most ravaged by the war. Torfou itself was the scene of one of the most notable Vendéean victories, and at a spot near the village where four roads meet, a granite column has been raised, bearing on it, in bronze letters, the words,

TORFOU.
SEPTEMBRE XIX.
1793

On the four sides of the column, at about half

its height, are four bronze crowns of oak-leaves, encircling each one of these memorable names: "BONCHAMPS," "CHARENTE," "D'ELBÉE," "LÉSCURE." It chanced that these four heroes arrived on the destined field of battle by the four roads above mentioned, and the name of each looks towards the quarter from which he came to the ground that day.

The fight of Torfou was one of the most tremendous of the war, and ended in the peasants utterly defeating their disciplined and thoroughly-armed opponents, the army of Mayence under Kléber. Never were two contending forces more contrasted in appearance, in feelings, in motives, and in circumstances! The army of Mayence, perfectly equipped, well clothed, and fed, flushed with victory, and confident in the recollection of former successes, animated with all those hopes which fortune holds out to the successful soldier, and inflamed by the most bitter hatred against the rustics, whose resistance they had found it so difficult to quell, advanced bristling with a uniform forest of bayonets and gay tri-coloured flags.

The Vendécans, on the other hand, were imperfectly equipped in every way. A great portion of their arms were mere fowling-

pieces ; and their dark garments, contrasting with the uniform of the soldiers, gave the entire mass the appearance of being clothed in mourning. In their thoughts and feelings how much greater was the contrast ! The surrounding country was in flames. The villages were burned. And where was each Vendéan's wife and child, sister, or mistress ? He knew not ! Wanderers ! chased from their blazing homes by the men he saw advancing to meet him in mortal combat, he knew not to what fate they might be exposed, or where they might then be seeking a refuge. He was fighting for his religion, his king, his laws, his rights, his family, and . . . no ! not his home. That was past ! But he was fighting him who had made it desolate. And when were men, with such feelings at their hearts as these, defeated !

They advanced in deep silence from the southward. The leaders of either army said a few last words of encouragement to their men. For the republicans, though they hated, had seen too much of Vendéan courage to despise the peasant troops.

“ Victors of Mayence ! ” cried Kléber, “ remember the Rhine, and the days of your glory ! ”

“ Vendéens !” said their leaders, “ you are surrounded by the flames ! Look around you ! Your burning homes cut off the possibility of retreat. For us there can be no turning. And on this ground we will conquer, or die for our religion and our king.”

Bouchamps and D'Elbée did not arrive in the field till some time after the fight had commenced. The day was going against the Vendéens, when their opportune arrival changed the tide of victory. There was, however, much hard fighting before the day was won. Retreat was almost as difficult for Kléber as it would have been for the Vendéens. The battle had literally been fought in the glare of the surrounding fires ; and the conflagration of the whole country around, which he had himself lighted, was now likely to become a very serious embarrassment to the republican general. There was, however, yet a possibility of retreating upon Clisson ; and this course he adopted, amid a murderous pursuit of the Vendéens. And thus, on that day, at Torfou, right triumphed over might.

It was one of those days which the historians of all ages have agreed to call glorious ; and the brave peasants of La Vendée may

be pardoned for looking back to it with exultation. It *is* glorious, certainly, to see right triumphant, and the oppressor humbled. But days of civil war—and, to the cosmopolite and catholic churchman, are not all wars civil wars?—can scarcely be deemed days of glory. It is a strange prejudice men have, to call a day of slaughter, of marring and destruction, a day of desolated homes and broken hearts—for it is not to those, whose hot blood is shed in the excitement of the fight, that the day of battle brings most suffering—a day of violence and wrong-doing, glorious. Such things may have been rendered necessary by the evil passions of men; and the defender of right, the protector of his country's homes and liberties, may deserve our gratitude and admiration. But surely the existence of such a necessity is a strange subject for glory and exultation; and if men were more advanced in civilization, the anniversaries of great battles would be, to all parties, days of humiliation rather than of glory, and kept with fasts rather than feasts.

All this was suggested to my reflections by the exulting reminiscences of the old landlord of a cabaret in the village, and the regrets of his son, a young man some twenty-five or

thirty years old, that he had not lived in those "glorious" days. I entered it for the purpose of slaking my thirst with some of the "vin blanc du pays," and inquiring my way to Tiffauges, a little town in the neighbourhood, at which I had made up my mind to find quarters for the night; and I sat there nearly an hour listening to the old man's description of the fight, in which he had been himself engaged. I own that I could not help sympathizing with his feelings on the subject; but I could by no means enter into those of his son, whose regret that he had not lived *then* seemed very much like wishing that there could be some more such fun now.

They told me that I was not above a league from Tiffauges by the shortest way, but counselled me strongly to go round by the highroad, which makes a great angle, telling me that there were "des rochers dans le travers," and that that path was not "convenable pour Monsieur." It seemed as if they thought that a *Monsieur*, if he had not a carriage "par malheur," would at least require a carriage-road to travel on. I disregarded their advice, however, and had a delightful walk by the "travers" to Tiffauges.

The path crossed a wild and rugged bit of

country, thickly-strewn with large masses of rock, as the old Vendécan warrior had told me. There was nothing whatever to make the path impracticable, or even the least difficult; but the French peasant has ever a marvellous predilection for the highroad, and will never suffer a traveller to make use of a short cut if he can help it. Upon the present occasion, the "chemin de travers" was desirable in every way, for it shortened the distance considerably, which was very acceptable, as the day was drawing to a close, and passed through some bits of scenery well worth seeing, and interesting even at the fag-end of a long day's walk.

As I again neared the Sévre, on which Tiffauges is situated, and looked down into the deep valley, which here also shuts it in, the view before me was romantic and picturesque in a high degree. The bottom and sides of the valley, and bed of the stream, thickly-strewn with large masses of grey rocks, not growing through the covering of soil, but thrown upon it by some violent convulsion, indicate the former existence of volcanic action here. But the rich grass, with which the bottom of the valley is carpeted, with the sheep grazing amid the huge masses of rock,

or availing themselves of them to shelter them from the slanting rays of the setting sun, imparted a character of domestic tranquillity and peace to the scene, which softened the expression of its otherwise rugged features. The side of the valley opposite to me, as I descended into it, was covered with wood, which was in deep shade, and as black as night, while the steep I was coming down was clothed with gorse, growing around and among the rocks, and receiving a flood of ruddy light from the sun's rays upon the golden glow of its yellow blossoms, as he poured his last light into the valley before he dipped behind the opposite hill.

The path led me for a little way along the bottom of the dell, and I presently came in sight of the ruins of the castle of Tiffauges, on the top of a rock on the other side of the valley. This eminence is in a great degree surrounded by the Sèvre, which makes a turn around the base of the rock. A little nameless stream falling into it at this point contributes by its valley to isolate still further the mass upon which the castle is built; and upon the opposite side, the neck of land which connects it with the high ground on which the town stands—for, unlike Clisson, Tiffauges looks

down upon the valley, instead of sheltering itself within it—is deeply cut through by an artificial dike, by which the road that approaches the town from the other side of the valley now passes.

The topmost bits of the jagged, grisly walls of the castle were still lighted up by the last beams of the sun, while the greater part of its black mass was in shade. The moment was a fortunate one, and the effect was very striking. The landscape, from the spot whence I first caught sight of the castle, is much superior in picturesque beauty to any thing there is at Clisson. But nobody has decked it out with gravel-walks, and temples, artificial waterfalls, summer-houses, and “heathen goddesses most rare, all standing naked in the open air;” and so the guide-book writers, and lithograph-makers, and poets, and pic-nic parties, have not troubled its solitude, or celebrated its beauties.

I was so much pleased with the general appearance of the place, that I determined to remain there the next day; more especially as it was now too late to visit the castle; and I judged, from the appearance and extent of it, that I should be likely to spend some hours in prowling about it. So I made the best of

my way up the hill, and into the "place" of the quiet little town, where, to confirm me in my intentions, I found a delightful old-fashioned holstelry, almost untenanted—and, from the unimportance of the little town, I should conceive never approached by a "com-mis voyageur."

It has been doubted whether there existed in France such a thing as an old maid. Now, I can certify that there are three soi-disant such at Tiffauges — the co-heiresses and hostesses of my inn. They gave me some plain mutton-chops and potatoes — the latter "by particular desire"—for my dinner; and having dined, or rather supped, greatly to my satisfaction, off a clean cloth, at my leisure, without any one blaspheming in my ears, or sitting with his hat on opposite to me, and upon a plain dish, I was not sorry to turn into a very good bed.

The chamber, in one corner of which it was placed, was an enormously large and most gloomy-looking apartment—just such a one as is always assigned in a haunted castle to the unexpected visitor, whom a romancer intends to make the victim of an unprincipled night-walking ghost. The resemblance, however, was not perfect; for there was no cheerful

fire burning on the huge hearth, and no old butler to place a flagon of canary on the table, and bid me "God speed you!" as he tottered out of the room, without daring to look behind him.

The ladies of the castle, moreover, had done all in their power to alleviate the gloom which a solitary sojourner must feel in such a chamber, by placing no less than five beds in it. But alas! for the revenues of the three maids of Tiffauges, customers were wanting to fill them; and, far more to their sorrow than my own, I was the sole occupant of the capacious dormitory.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Tiffauges—My Hostelry there—The Billiard-Room—Dining-Room and Kitchen—My Landlady's Tale—Past Grievances versus Present Annoyances—The Chateau—Blue Beard again—Present State of the Chateau—"The Blue Chamber"—Tiffauges under the Romans—Tibullus on the Banks of the Sèvre—Tiffauges in the Fifteenth Century—Anecdote of its Commandant during the Wars of the League—Destruction of the Chateau—Carp in the Sèvre—Moonlight Walk—Popular Reminiscences of Gilles de Laval—Superstitions.

My hostelry at Tiffauges, though a little inn, was a large house—a world too wide for its shrunk inmates—for such the good sisters gave me to understand they were in fortunes and estate, and such they had the appearance of being in a more literal sense. It was a substantial old building, nearly square, and consisted of four vast rooms and a large hall on the ground floor, and five chambers of similar dimensions above. It had apparently, at some former time, formed part of a larger building; but that which remained was more than sufficient for the wants and accommo-

dation of its customers. On one side of the wide hall, on which the front door opened, was a large billiard-room, in which a quadrille of billiard-tables might have danced without any danger of bruising each other. The one old table, which stood desolately isolated in the middle of the space, was covered with a carefully-tied cloth, which looked as if it had not been moved for years, and a few old chairs stood unwearied and unmoving sentinels on either side of the yawning hearth. My footsteps, as I wandered round the room, woke dull echoes, that sounded as if they were aroused from long sleep ; and I am sure that the click of the billiard-balls would have started the venerable spiders on the ceiling into hysterics.

On the other side of the hall was a smaller and somewhat more inhabited-looking “salle à manger.” The large space of the hall seemed to have been partitioned off this ; and the two together would have made an apartment about as large as the billiard-room. A long table, supported on settles, ran along the whole length of this from the window to the door, on the side opposite to the fireplace. But it was evidently in its dotage, long since unaccustomed to the bustle of business, and the clatter of knives and forks.

Nearer the fireplace was a little round table, tight and sound, to which the whole affairs of the *salle à manger* had clearly been delegated, and which was evidently perfectly capable of managing the contracted business of the concern. It was on this that my last night's dinner had been served. The hearth was as large and yawning as that of the billiard-room, but it was garnished with a pair of huge, antiquated, and well-furbished dogs. The fronts of them were overlaid with brass, and shaped into two chubby-faced cherubim, the tips of whose noses and prominent swell of their cheeks were curiously marked with round black patches, from the brass having been worn through by frequent cleaning and polishing.

The walls of the room were garnished with two very large coloured prints of the Virgin Mary and Louis Dix-huit, one on each side of the fireplace; a tattered map of the province of "Poictou," in which every village was represented by a little picture of a castle, and all the streams had whole fleets of ships sailing down them, over the chimney-piece; and an ancient plan of the siege of Tournay on the wall opposite to it. One of those comfortable old chairs, of which the back, rising

just high enough for the elbows, goes round two adjacent sides of the seat, leaving the opposite angle protruding in front, stood on either side of the hearth; and several other high-backed, wooden machines of unrest were ranged round the walls.

Behind these two rooms and the hall were a kitchen and the sacred bedchamber of the three sisters. Of the latter, I regret to be able to offer no information to the curious.

The kitchen was something like a kitchen indeed! not one of your small, dark, dirty, holes, such as are kitchens at Paris, many a one of which I have seen of smaller dimensions than the huge, funnel-shaped chimney, which gaped over the wide hearth of this vast apartment. The hearth-stone was not as usual raised a step from the floor of the room, but was level with it, and was of dimensions to hold a fire perfectly sufficient to have roasted an ox whole, and a few sheep into the bargain. There seemed, however, little chance of its capabilities being put in requisition, even to a much more moderate extent. A small wood fire burned beneath the suspended soup-pot at the back of it, and glimmered in the distant obscurity, without sufficing to light up the entire space overhung by the

huge chimney. It was an emblem of the quiet mistresses of the mansion.

A thick wooden pillar, in the middle of the apartment, supported the naked rafters of the roof, and was decorated by a large crucifix. This had once been coloured, but was now smoke and time blackened, as was also the post to which it was affixed. A long range of some ten or twelve stew-holes occupied the whole side of the apartment beneath the windows, at right angles with the fireplace. The first three or four of these, with the bricks around them, were clean, and in working order. The remainder had evidently been long out of work, and fell off, as they receded from the top, into a gradually increasing appearance of desuetude, till the last were buried beneath a stack of fagots. Immediately in front of the three stew-holes on active service, and close to the door which communicated with their bedroom, sat always the three maidens, on a sort of little square dais, or floor, which, in this corner of the kitchen, was raised about three inches above the stone-paved level of the rest of the apartment; and there I found them all three, when I entered the room in the morning to ask for some breakfast, and have a little chat with my landladies while it was being prepared.





Designed and Etched by A. H. ...

THE ...

Nice, clean, tidy, good-humoured little old women they were, with spotless white caps, whose long pendent fillets — “barbes,” they call them—fell upon their shoulders, and, contrasting with their black dresses, gave them the appearance of nuns. They all three had very fine, long, silvery grey hair, and sharp black eyes, still as bright as they could have been forty or fifty years ago. And, as far as I could judge from features, which had borne the brunt of between sixty and seventy years, want of personal attraction could not have been the cause of their having all three remained spinsters in a land where that honourable though much reviled estate is so uncommon.

I found that I was right in so conjecturing ; for the good old ladies desired nothing better than to chatter, and I was soon master of their whole biography. I should have been so sooner still, but that they could not agree who should be spokeswoman. Each caught the words of her neighbour’s mouth the instant either began to speak, and went on with the well-known sentence which was to follow, so that their story assumed very much the nature of a catch.

It was, however, a sufficiently melancholy

one, though it seemed, from their manner of telling it, to be now rather a matter of pride than of any other feeling to the poor old women, who appeared so eager to talk of their misfortunes. Denuded of all the interruptions and amplifications of "Oui, monsieur, comme ma sœur vous vient de dire"—"concevez vous"—"Taisez vous donc, ma sœur; il n'y a pas besoin de dire tout cela a monsieur. Il comprend que," &c., their tale was simply this.

They were the daughters of one of the richest farmers of the Bocage; and this is not saying little for their station in the world. Many of the farmers were, in relation to their wants and ideas, very wealthy. Thrifty, industrious, and economical, living simply and unostentatiously, though substantially and well, the holder of a small farm, for there were few large ones, frequently amassed a considerable capital. In many instances this was the accumulation of more than one generation. Though in very many cases no leases were granted, the seigneur and the farmer had perfect confidence in each other; and the son succeeded to his father's farm as regularly as the seigneur's son succeeded to the estate. Sometimes the wealth thus accumu-

lated assumed, in the cultivator's dwelling, a more visible appearance, in the shape of various utensils of silver, large stores of fine linen, handsomely-carved and highly-polished cherry-wood chests and presses, &c. ; but, for all this, the habits of the owner's life were not changed, and the store went on increasing.

Of this class was the father of my heroines ; and they were his only children. One brother, who had been born, the hope of the house, heir to the family savings, and anticipated successor in the farm, died an infant. The three sisters, therefore, were great heiresses ; “ *et une belle n'est pas moins belle pour cela, vous savez, aux yeux d'un amant,*” interrupted one of the subjects of the tale. Suitors were numerous ; so much so, they all joined in assuring me, as to be “ *vraiment ennuyants.*” But a Vendéean farmer's heiress is not a prize to be caught by the first comer. The rich peasants dread a “ *mésalliance*” as much as a Rohan or a Montmorenci ; and none but the eldest sons of farmers known to be wealthy could be admitted as aspirants to the three heiresses' fair hands.

The possessors of such black eyes and such expectations were not, however, likely to remain long without suitable proposals : and,

before the eldest of the sisters had completed her twentieth year, they were all engaged to eligible "partis." But they were then on the eve of evil days. The storm, which was already pouring out its fury on the capital and larger towns, had not yet burst over these remote and peaceful fields. But it was even then rolling, with hoarse and ominous sound, above the heads of the alarmed inhabitants.

To use the words attributed to a peasant, by the author of the *Lettres Vendéennes*, and which are, as nearly as possible, to the same purport as those used by the youngest of my landladies:—"Petit à petit les jours de danse et de chasse devinrent plus rares. On commença à dire dans le pays que le peuple allait être bien plus heureux qu'autrefois; et plus on nous le répétait, et moins nous avions de joie et de bonheur. Des inconnus parcouraient nos campagnes; ils nous disaient de nous défier des nobles; que c'étaient nos plus grands ennemis; qu'ils avaient fait une ligue avec les prêtres pour nous rendre esclaves Mais ces propos-là ne prenaient pas dans notre pays." Situated in one of the most secluded districts of the Bocage, the family of my hostesses and their neighbours paid little attention to these things, but congratulated

themselves that they were Vendéans instead of Parisians, and went on in their old way, fearing God and honouring the king, and devotedly attached to their priests and seigneurs.

Meanwhile, affairs infinitely more interesting to the three heiresses, as they then thought, than the convulsions of the nation, and the death-struggle of its social system, were also progressing towards a dénouement. Though the youngest was only just turned eighteen years old, it had been determined that the sisters should all three be married on the same day. The courtship, with all its old-fashioned usages and peculiar ceremonies; its nocturnal serenades, and dances at neighbouring fêtes and village festivals, had lasted its due period; and the important day was fixed. "Mais l'homme propose, pendant que Dieu dispose!" . . . Fixed, alas! what is man's fixing? Here were the three brides, whose marriage-day had been fixed, three old and shrivelled spinsters, alone in the world, without a single family-tie, or a being in the world to whom they could look to tend their declining years, or smooth the thorny path of infirmity and age!

The very day but one before they were to

have been married, it was known throughout the scattered granges of the village that the curé had been forcibly taken from his house by armed soldiers, and that the offices of the church must, consequently, remain unperformed. This was the first signal for resistance. The peasants assembled unanimously, pursued the captors of their curé, and effected his rescue. Similar events had taken place in the neighbouring parishes. Larger bodies of the inhabitants were assembling, with the most influential gentlemen of the district at their head; and measures for attempting to rid the country of the republican troops were being concerted. It was now no longer a time for marrying, or giving in marriage. Events followed each other rapidly. The whole force of the parish in which the sisters lived, and of those adjoining to it, left their homes to join in the deliverance of their country; and all three of the intended bridegrooms fell together, with their purposed father-in-law, in one of the first disastrous skirmishes of the war, in a wood near the present frontier of La Vendée and Les deux Sèvres, in which a considerable body of the insurgents had been hearing mass.

Not long afterwards, the bereaved orphans

—for they had some time previously lost their mother—were obliged to abandon their dwelling, with a great number of others similarly circumstanced, and succeeded with much difficulty in reaching the place of security in the forest of Grâla, which has been before mentioned.

By some means or other — probably by hiding the money which was in the house—for the farmers often kept the bulk of their savings by them in cash—a sufficient portion of their property was saved to establish them on the return of tranquillity in the house I have attempted to describe; and I presume to support them there also; for there was small appearance about the place of their trade as publicans being sufficient to support any body.

Such was the “ tale of my landladies.” The poor old women did not appear to suffer any re-opening of partially-healed sores in the telling of it, but, rather, to feel a pride in their misfortunes, and take a pleasure in narrating them. They spoke much more feelingly about their present want of custom; though, in the one case, they were telling of the shipwreck of the hopes and happiness of a life; and, in the other, of the addition of a few francs, more or less, to their means — so entirely does time

act on the mind, as space upon the eye, and render the hillock before us more mighty than the mountain in the distance.

The youngest of them told me that there was excellent fishing in the Sèvre, and begged me to tell all my friends so, saying that she had heard that there were “*des milords Anglais, qui s’amusent d’attrapper les poissons eux même, et puis de les manger pour souper après, vous savez,*” and requesting me to inform any such that she and her sisters could afford accommodation to them, and dress all their fish for them.

After breakfast I walked down to the chateau ; for the rock on which it stands is not so high as the town, and it might have been commanded by cannon from more than one point.

This was also one of the properties of the terrible blue-bearded baron, Gilles de Laval ; and here also the inhabitants have numberless traditions of the horrors perpetrated in this castle, also, by him and his literally, as well as metaphorically, diabolical agents. The building must have been immense. A farmhouse has been built within its walls, and the greater part of the area they enclosed is now cultivated ; for the top of the rock is covered with a thick coat of earth. Enough, how-

ever, of the old building remains, not only for all the purposes of the landscape-painter, but to amuse the explorer, and exercise the speculations of the antiquary. For those, too, who like to amuse their imaginations by fancying themselves in the hidden chambers, which were the scenes of his incantations and abominations, there are abundance of subterranean chambers, strange holes, secret staircases, and hidden passages. As to the celebrated "Blue-chamber," in the absence of all positive information on the subject, I am induced to venture a conjecture that it was a certain miserable hole beneath one of the towers still remaining, which seems to have been approachable only by a long, subterraneous passage, which is entered from another tower. This opinion, however, is put forward with diffidence, merely as the result of my own conscientious, personal investigations, and with due submission to the judgment of the learned upon this interesting point.

Tiffauges is, however, rich in mighty names and deeds of more authentic history. The site of the castle was that of one of the most important Roman stations. Crassus was the first to whom the task of subduing this part

of Gaul was assigned by Julius Cæsar. He entirely failed, and the Roman eagles were obliged to retire before the barbarians, who inhabited this then all but impenetrable forest. No part of Gaul gave the conqueror more trouble than this portion of the western coast, except, indeed, Brittany, which it is certain he never permanently subdued. The local historians of this country, also, are fond of maintaining that it was never entirely conquered, but only shut in by a surrounding line of Roman stations and fortresses. And there are certainly strong grounds for believing that some remains of the original population continued throughout the whole period of the Roman domination in Gaul, in certain parts of this coast, unmixed with any other race, uncivilized by contact with the strangers, and unamenable to their authority.

Agrippa, who commanded the next Roman expedition against the Bocage, is said to have established his general quarters at the camp of Tiffauges, and to have completed the road from "Limonum" — Limoges, to "Condivicium" — Nantes. The frequent stations on this road formed a line, which completely shut in the obstinate inhabitants of the Bocage between it and the ocean.

Ten years later, in the year of Rome, 727, Augustus sent Messala to complete the subjection of this part of Gaul. He must necessarily have come to Tiffauges; and it is more than probable, as Tibullus tells us that he was with him upon that occasion, that the romantic banks of the Sèvre have echoed to the strains of the sweetest of all the Latin love-poets. He certainly does not mention Teiphalia, which was the name of Tiffauges in those days; but, as he was with Messala, both in Saintonge and on the Loire, he could hardly have failed to pass by this camp. In the eighth elegy of the first book he says:—

Non sine me est tibi partus honos; Tarbella Pyrene
 Testis et Oceani littora Santouici.
 Testis Arar, Rhodanusque celer, magnusque Garumna,
 Carnuti et flavi cærulea lympha Liger.

It may be remarked *en passant*, that either the Loire must have very materially changed its habits and appearance since the days of Tibullus, or he must be a most faithless topographical describer; for “cærulea” is the last of all epithets to apply to the yellow turbid Loire.

In the twelfth century, Tiffauges was possessed by the Vicomtes de Thouars, who de-

stroyed all the Roman work which then remained, and replaced it by the eastern architecture, which the crusades had then introduced. In the fifteenth century, the family of La Trémouille had become owners of the castle; and the old chronicles have preserved most gorgeous accounts of the splendour of the almost regal court they held there. At one period, especially, while Francis II. of Brittany was residing at Clisson, being deeply in love with Antoinette de Magnelais, a youthful widow who lived at Chollet, Tiffauges, which is situated half way between these two places, rivalled the succession of fêtes which the sovereign duke was giving at Clisson. Many of the brightest ornaments of the splendid chivalry of that period were then assembled on these banks of the Sèvre; and a brilliant series of jousts, pageants, mysteries, with all the ponderous magnificence of the amusements then in vogue, attracted the gay crowd from one castle to the other, alternately, while the proud noble and the independent sovereign vied with each other in the brilliancy and eclat of their festivals.

Shortly afterwards, the scene changed at Tiffauges. The wars of the League broke out, and the castle was held for the king by

Champigny, who suffered himself to be seduced from his allegiance, by the specious representations and brilliant promises the crafty Duc de Mercœur so well knew how to bait his hook with, and threw open his gates to the leaguers. Champigny was not by many the only man who had shewn himself a traitor in the course of these disastrous wars ; but he was peculiarly unfortunate in the period of his treason ; for scarcely had it been committed before France, once more reduced to obedience, had accepted Henry IV. for her king. The league was broken up ; Mercœur obtained his pardon from the placable monarch for his rebellion, and Champigny was once again summoned by the party he had so lately served to render up the place.

Small rebels sometimes suffer in these cases when great ones escape. Champigny gave himself up for a lost man ; and in truth, he deserved whatever treatment he might meet with for his breach of trust.

Henry was at Angers, in no very unforgiving mood, probably ; for prosperity, which fosters in unworthy minds all selfish vices, insolence, and unforgiving pride, produces kindly and congenial fruits when it shines on noble hearts. Champigny sent thither to him

his wife, to beg forgiveness for his treachery. The poor lady was in a very unfit state to travel, being far advanced in pregnancy. The journey, however, must be accomplished, and that quickly—and journeys were very different affairs in those days from what they are now even in France. It *was* accomplished; and the traitor's wife flew instantly on her arrival to throw herself at the king's feet. But the agitation of the moment, joined to the exhaustion occasioned by the journey she had performed, were too much for her, and the king had a new subject, and, it is to be hoped, a better one, born almost in his own presence. The incident was naturally sufficient to secure the boon for which the mother begged, in days when to be or not to be gibbeted depended, not on the unvarying dictates of stern justice, but on the personal feelings of the monarch.

At a later period, the castle of Tiffauges protected for a long while the unfortunate Calvinists of this part of the country from the fury of Richelieu. It was, however, at last taken, and by his orders burnt. It was never after restored; and, with the exception of the work of time upon the ruins, and the mischief done by the pillage of the materials, which

was for a long while unchecked, the castle still remains as the fire left it.

I spent the remainder of the day, after leaving the chateau, in rambling along the romantic banks of the river. I cannot amuse myself by trying to catch fish, and therefore can give no confirmation, from my own experience, of the truth of my landlady's assertion respecting the fishing in the river. But to the excellent quality of them when caught I can testify, for I dined on a broiled carp, taken in the clear rocky Sèvre, which might have taught epicures to despise the richly-stewed but mud-flavoured denizens of ponds. I always thought that carp required muddy waters, or, at least, water in which there was mud at the bottom. But this seems to be a great mistake, for they grow to a very large size in the limpid Sèvre, and are extremely good and clean-tasted.

As soon as the moon got up, I walked once more down into the beautiful valley, to enjoy the scenery by that peculiar light. All three of my landladies joined in entreating me not to think of going into or near the castle, assuring me that it was extremely dangerous; that nobody in Tiffauges would dream of going near the ruins after dark, for that "il était impos-

sible de dire ce qu'il pouvait y arriver." It is curious that, of all the various names attached to this old castle, and all the motley records of its eventful history, the only name which yet lives in the memory of the people, and the only historical facts which have made a lasting impression on the popular mind, are that of Gilles de Laval, the wicked Marechal de Retz, and the atrocities committed there by him — so prone is the uncultivated mind to the contemplation of horrors.

Throughout the neighbourhood a thousand superstitions are current, about the ruins of the dwelling of the murderer and necromancer. The hideous half-burnt body of the monster himself, circled with flames, pale, indeed, and faint in colour, but more lasting than those the hangman kindled around his mortal form in the meadow under the walls of Nantes, is seen, on bright moonlight nights, standing now on one topmost point of craggy wall, and now on another, and is heard mingling his moan with the sough of the night-wind. Pale, bloodless forms, too, of youthful growth and mien, the restless, unsepulchred ghosts of the unfortunates who perished in these dungeons, unassoiled, with lingering agony, as their lifeblood flowed from their veins for the im-

pure purposes of the tyrant's demon-worship—these, too, may at similar times be seen flitting backwards and forwards, in numerous groups, across the space enclosed by the ruined wall, with more than mortal speed, or glancing hurriedly from window to window of the fabric, as still seeking to escape from its hateful confinement.

Despite these terrors, with which their old tyrant still contrives to torment the descendants of his former vassals, I enjoyed my moonlight stroll exceedingly. The dancing stream, the grey rocks on the side of the hill, lying half in shade, half silvered by the cold pale rays, ghosts of the departed sunbeams, the ruins of the castle, exhibiting a thousand capricious changes of light and shade, are all well calculated to form a lovely moonlight scene. And though possibly I might have seen—nay, am rather inclined to think I *did* see—some of the appearances of whose existence I had been warned, as the fitful light, changing with every passing cloud that flitted across the sky, brought now one part and now another of the fantastically-shaped fragments into relief, yet I had the comfort of knowing that the Sèvre's running stream was at the time between me and them; and, thus

secured from their doing me a mischief, I returned to my bed, and, I believe, to my good hostesses' surprise, safe and sound from my ramble.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Walk to Les Herbiers—La Gaubretière—Nature of the Scenery—Village Congregation—Costume of the Peasants — A Vendéean Regiment—Mont des Alouettes—Duchesses de Berry et d'Angoulême—Chapel on the Mont des Alouettes —View from thence — Nature of the Scenery in the Bocage—Roads in La Vendée—Advantages the Nature of the Country afforded the Peasants in the War — Scene in the Inn Kitchen at Les Herbiers — A Village Beauty — Company at the Table d'Hôte — Wives' Dinners in France — A Royalist's Story — Fish at Les Herbiers — A Walk with my Landlord—Antiquities—First Foundation of Les Herbiers—Legend—Curious Confirmation of the Truth of it—Subsequent History of the Town—The Salt War—The Religious Wars —A Sudden Death.

THE next morning I left Tiffauges, about five o'clock, to walk to Les Herbiers, a little town, about five leagues to the south-east. It was a fine, clear, bright, cheery morning, and, on some account or other, a fête day, as I found on passing through the first village on my route. This was La Gaubretière, a property of the Larochejaquelins. It is situated on high open ground, and commands a fine view over the country for many miles

towards the south. The people were just coming out of church, and I was struck by the neatness and smartness of the congregation. They forthwith began moving off in groups to their scattered farms in all directions, the men and women invariably in different bodies.

The women were dressed in short gowns of striped woollen stuff of various colours, chiefly red, yellow, and blue, with very high waists and tight sleeves. The gown ceases some inches above the ancle, and permits the exhibition of a pair of white, ornamented linen stockings, knitted by the fair wearer's own hands, from flaxen yarn of her own spinning. A bright coloured cotton handkerchief, manufactured at the neighbouring town of Chollet, in the department of Maine et Loire, is spread over her shoulders, and its ends secured in front within the bosom of her gown, in such fashion as to leave no portion of the neck or bosom uncovered. The sabot is, in this part of the country, an article of the "paysanne's" costume, on which no small care is bestowed. They are small and slight, cut very low in the front, so as to shew a great part of the foot, and shaped with as much care as a fashionable London artist could em-

ploy on the form of a pair of boots. They are, moreover, always painted black, in order the better to set off the white stocking. A good deal of lace is often displayed about their caps; and the "barbes" of the coiffure, as they are termed, which are long strips of cotton, linen, or sometimes muslin, about six inches broad, falling on each side of the face upon the shoulders, are frequently trimmed all round with it. The girls rarely hide their hair entirely here as they do in Brittany. It is for the most part beautifully black, and a specimen of it is generally seen in a broad band on each side of the forehead. This costume is very generally completed by a short, black, woollen cloak, made to keep open in front, and shew the neat striped cotton apron beneath it.

The villagers of La Gaubretière, on whose costumes I made these observations, were all, it is true, dressed in their holiday trim; but the ordinary appearance of the peasants of La Vendée, more especially of the women, is, I think, more neat and cleanly than that of most of the inhabitants of the banks of the Loire.

The men of the Bocage appeared to me for the most part small, but well knit and sinewy.

They wear a large, round, felt hat, like those used in some parts of Brittany ; of somewhat more moderate dimensions, however, than the Bretons of the Côtes du Nord ; but, in other respects, their dress is not distinguished by any remarkable peculiarity. Their sabots, unlike those of the women, are enormously large, and encase the entire foot almost to the ankle. Large, white, woollen, double-breasted waistcoats, which contrast with the general darkness of the other parts of their dress, and give a neatness and brightness to their general appearance, are very common.

Suppose five or six hundred such figures ranged in a meadow, with each a broad scarf of red Chollet cotton stuff bound around his waist, in which are stuck a brace of huge pistols, and a gun carried sportsman-like rather than soldierly across his shoulder, with a large snow-white flag, bearing for all device the single word, " VENDORÉE," and you will have a tolerably accurate idea of one of those suddenly-raised Vendéean regiments which achieved such wonders.

A little before arriving at Gaubretière, I had entered a very different style of country from that which I was leaving behind me on the banks of the Sèvre. A range of open, high

downs, bleak, and in a great measure denuded of trees, cross the country here, and form as strong a contrast as can be conceived to the luxuriant vegetation and thick shady verdure of the woodland scenery at their base. In several places, the native granite appears through the thin covering of light soil; and the few tufts of trees, which may be seen here and there, have the meagre, half-starved appearance that indicates the want of a sufficient depth of soil for their nutriment.

The highest of this range of downs is the "Mont des Alouettes," about half a league to the north of Les Herbiers. The road from Mortaigne to the latter town traverses it; and before I descended into the lower country, in which Les Herbiers is situated, I struck across the downs towards it, for the sake of the celebrated view of the Bocage it commands. When the Duchesses de Berry and D'Angoulême passed through La Vendée, they ascended the Mont des Alouettes, and looked over the face of the faithful country which had suffered so much, and at that period still showed so many traces of its sufferings for its attachment to their family. It is easy to conceive with what feelings they must have gazed over the wide prospect spread out beneath them. A little

gothic chapel, built there by their orders, commemorates their visit to the spot, and marks the Mont des Alouettes among the neighbouring downs for several leagues around. It is built entirely of wrought granite, and would have been, if it had been finished, a beautiful gem of architecture. But the glory of the three days fell out before it was completed; and of course France, now regenerated for the second time, could not give its enlightened countenance to a project uniting in itself two such elements as royalism and chapel-building. So the little fabric, of which the shell only had been raised, is now disfigured with a hideous roof of red tiles, and serves no other purpose than that of occasionally affording a shelter to the shepherd of the flocks which graze upon the neighbouring downs.

The "Mont des Alouettes" is the highest ground in La Vendée, being about a thousand feet above the level of the sea, and the view from it is a very peculiar one. The whole of the Bocage, and a considerable extent of country beyond its limits, are spread out beneath the gaze; and it is said that on a clear day the naked eye can descry the towers of St. Peter, at Nantes, on the one hand, and the slender spire of the cathedral at Luçon on

the other, each of which are, in a direct line, ten or twelve leagues distant. I cannot say that I could see either, although the state of the atmosphere was tolerably favourable. But of course, in an experiment of the kind, everything depends upon knowing exactly in what part of the horizon to look for the object in question.

As seen from the "Mont des Alouettes," the Bocage is at once perceived to merit its appellation. Immediately beneath the hill, the little town of Herbiers, peering out from amid the richness of the surrounding verdure, and the gardens, and numberless small fields around it, each encircled by its lofty, luxuriant hedge, well studded with hedge-row timber, form the foreground of the picture; while farther away, as the eye is less able to distinguish the green area of each separate enclosure, the country assumes the appearance of a verdant sylvan wilderness of overgrown thickets and bosky dells; till, in the remoter distance, the whole surface of the land seems blended into the semblance of one vast undulating forest.

Through the whole extent of this country, there is no town worthy of the name, and it is intersected but by few roads, and those of

recent construction. During the period of the Vendéean wars, there were none. There are a good many villages, but a very large proportion of the inhabitants are scattered over the surface of the country in isolated farm-houses, and cottages. These all communicate with their neighbours by a multitude of narrow paths, which, crossing each other in every direction, and winding round the angles of every field, constitute to all but those well acquainted with the country an inextricable labyrinth. To add to a stranger's perplexity, and ignorance of the direction in which he is going, the majority of these roads are hollowed out between deep banks, surmounted with enormously thick and lofty hedges. A subterranean tunnel would not more entirely keep a passenger through it from all knowledge of the localities of the country through which he was travelling, than many of these roads. Most of them are too narrow for two carts to pass, and many so deep, so narrow, and overgrown, as never to be visited by the rays of the sun. The wear of centuries has, year after year, removed something from these roads, if such they can be called, which is never replaced by any attempt to mend them; and in many cases the deepening process is

considerably accelerated by the winter waters; for at that season, every year, many of the hollow lanes become water-courses, and are inundated to such a degree as to make them perfectly impassable.

Such is the Bocage of La Vendée; and it is not difficult to conceive what must be the position of troops moving through such a country, and waging a war of extermination with its inhabitants. Their every step was through a defile, which exposed them to their enemies, and rendered defence or retaliation almost impossible; while to the skirmishing fighting, ambuscades, sudden onsets, and rapid dispersion of the children of the soil, nothing could be more favourable than its peculiarities.

It was a long time before I could satisfy myself with gazing over this storied ground. More than twenty battle-fields lie beneath the eye, as from the "Mont des Alouettes" it travels round the wide horizon—Torfou, Montaigu, Saint Fulgent, Les Quatre Chemins, Pont-Lagé, Les Brouzils, Pont-Charron, Fontenay, Luçon, with several others, all noted for engagements more or less important, and all saturated with the blood of one or both of the parties in that deadly struggle!

It was past ten when I reached Les Herbiers, a little town, which has the reputation of being the most considerable in the Bocage, and yet scarcely deserving to be called any thing but a large village. When I arrived at the inn, the landlady, a remarkably handsome woman, of some forty years of age—a very rare thing among the women of the villages, who, if they ever have any beauty, almost invariably lose it with the first freshness of youth—was engaged in dressing her daughter, a beautiful miniature of herself, for high mass. It was not a matter to be accomplished in a hurry; and many were the arrangings and re-arrangings of her long, glossy, black curls over her prettily-turned neck and shoulders; for she was not above ten years old, and had not yet assumed the coiffure. The father, meanwhile, sat in an easy chair on the other side of the kitchen fireplace, looking on, well pleased.

Breakfast, it seemed, was only waiting to be served till little missy was despatched to church; for here, as I have once or twice before found in small retired towns, the table d'hôte was actually such; and the landlord and his handsome wife sat down to breakfast in the *salle à manger* with two or three “pen-

sionaires," who had been very patiently lounging in the sun before the door till the bell should summon them and myself, as soon as the little lady had taken her departure. Decked in white muslin and lace, and white shoes, and a coronet of white roses on her jet black silk hair, the delicate little *vouée au blanc* was really "faite à peindre" as she tripped down the street, the envy of many a rival mother's heart.

The company at breakfast consisted of the *juge de pays*, a tax-collector, or controller, or something of the sort, one of the principal shopkeepers in the village, the landlord, his wife, and myself. Whether the first three were old bachelors or not, or whether, if they had any wives, their wives ever got any dinner, or whether, supposing them to obtain a solitary morsel, such a scheme of domestic felicity is approved by the sex in this most gallant of all countries, the paradise of women, I know not. But it seemed, at all events, that the gentlemen were in the habit of eating a very good breakfast and dinner at mine host's table every day in the year.

Is not one tempted to suppose that those English ladies—and, alas! there are such—who are wont to term France their sex's pa-

radise, must consider matrimonial happiness to consist in seeing as little as possible of their husbands!

As it was a holiday, and desperately hot, lazy weather, the assembled party, with the exception of the hostess, who hurried off to her domestic avocations as soon as ever she had finished her meal, remained sitting round the board and chatting some time after breakfast; and, as I found myself in much better company than among the *commis voyageurs*—although M. le Juge de pays *did*, in his anxiety to be civil to a stranger, hand me a piece of fried sole with his fingers—I thought I could not employ the time better than in listening to the conversation. The characters of the guests were soon evident. The tax man was an “*esprit fort*;” the tradesman a royalist and catholic of the old school; and M. le Juge a *bon vivant*. Our host, of course, after the manner of hosts of all ages and climes, would not risk offending either of his customers by expressing any very strong opinions either in politics or religion. He was, however, rather a superior man to the generality of his class, had evidently read a good deal, and was a bit of an antiquary in his way.

The old shopkeeper told me a long story about his assisting his brother—a priest—to escape from France during the reign of terror ; how they were obliged to hide themselves in the neighbourhood of the seashore for several days before an opportunity offered itself ; how the “Marais,” as the country in the neighbourhood of the coasts is called, was very different from the Bocage, and afforded very little means of concealment ; how his brother, during these days of anxiety, and almost of starvation, had, in defiance of all prudence, and of his own earnest, dissuasive arguments, insisted on performing mass in a field before a number of poor people, who had lost their curé ; how he was very angry with him for it at the time, but now looked upon him as little less than a saint ; how his brother returned from England at the restoration, and was received by his old parishioners with rejoicings and processions ; how the church was hung all over with garlands and evergreens upon the occasion ; and how the good old man had been fortunate enough to die, in 1829, “avant de voir le recommencement des malheurs” in 1830.

All this was accompanied by a running commentary of sneers and sarcasm from the tax-collector, of which the other took no sort

of notice beyond saying to me in a parenthesis, " Il n' est pas de ce pays ici, celui. Il vient de l' autre coté de la Loire."

Meantime the juge de pays and the landlord were discussing the price of fish, which is brought here from Sables d'Olonne, by carts which carry the principal part of their load farther into the country, and were considering the practicability of establishing a regular fish-cart between Les Herbiers and Sables, for the supply of their town alone. If the reader should ever be tempted to visit La Vendée, and if he should dine, as, in all probability, he would, at Les Herbiers, he may very likely profit by the results of this morning's conversation.

When the party broke up, the landlord, whom I had questioned a little about the history of the place, offered to accompany me in a ramble in the environs of the town ; and we set out together — he, to enjoy the unwonted pleasure of displaying his antiquarian erudition, and I, to profit by his knowledge of the localities ; for, as to the curious traditions respecting the early history of the place, I had previously made myself acquainted with them, so that, to my cicerone's great surprise, and, perhaps, some little disappointment, he found the English stranger pretty nearly as well

versed in the annals of his native town as himself.

The present town, consisting almost entirely of one long street, through which runs the highroad from Chollet to Bourbon Vendée, has nothing to attract attention. There are some trifling remains of its fortifications, which were destroyed by Richelieu, at the close of the wars of religion, but nothing of interest. The days of Les Herbiers' glory must be sought at a period long anterior to the construction of those walls.

When Julius Cæsar was marching against Nantes, the terror of his name preceded his arrival; and a large portion of the population left the city, and, crossing the Loire, wandered southward into the forest, which covered most of this part of the country at that time. They found the country occupied, but scarcely inhabited, by a few stragglers of the Agesinates Cambolectri; and when they had wandered to the foot of the hills, which shelter the present town of Les Herbiers, to the north, they determined to settle themselves in so inviting a spot, and there build a town. They did so, and called it, from the remarkably luxuriant vegetation of the country around, Herbadilla. The new city thrived; became, from the habits

of its earliest inhabitants, the colony from Nantes, commercial, and grew in size, riches, and luxury. Tradition says that Venus had there a temple, and that the inhabitants worshipped that goddess with peculiar devotion.

The new city continued to enjoy increasing commerce and uninterrupted prosperity, till, one day, about the middle of the sixth century, a poor christian solitary presented himself at their gates. His name was Martin; and he had left his solitude in the forest of Vertou, sent, he said, by God, and St. Felix, bishop of Nantes, to preach to them the gospel, and convert them from Paganism to the only true religion. But the rich merchants laughed at the pious man, and thrust him from their doors; and the rabble hooted him and chased him from the city. The holy man turned more in anger, it may be feared, than in sorrow, from their walls; and, in the first heat of his indignation, he lifted his hands to heaven and prayed that the town might share the fate of Sodom, and perish suddenly in its sins.

His prayer was heard. The heaven instantly became overcast, the lightning flashed, the thunder roared, and earth trembled, as she prepared to execute vengeance on her guilty children, by swallowing in a yawning

chasm the greater part of the town. The two extremities only were spared. The whole centre of the town was gone, and a lake appeared where it had been. The pious solitary, it should seem, was shocked at the result of his own prayers; for it is recorded that he went to Rome to obtain absolution from the pope, for having prayed to God, and obtained the object of his prayer, in a moment of anger and evil passion. The remaining portions of the town, the legend goes on to relate, called back the missionary, and received from him instruction in the true faith with gladness and docility.

Now, this ancient legend might be dismissed as "monkish inventions," together with the enormous quantity of similar tales, which the writers of the lives of the saints have, with such persevering labour, handed down to us. But there are very curious evidences that such a catastrophe as that which St. Martin's biographer has attributed to him the credit of producing, did really take place. And this might be cited as one among a great many other similar proofs that the legendaries, for the most part, exaggerated, improved, and adapted facts to their own manner of seeing them, rather than invented

their recitals, without any foundation of truth whatsoever.

To the south of the town, between it and a little faubourg, called *Le Petit Bourg*, there is, at the present day, a large, low, marshy meadow, which was, in the seventeenth century, a lake. It was stagnant and unhealthy, and was, therefore, at that period, drained and turned into a meadow, whose soil and surface still give evidence of its former condition. Here we have the lake and the two extremities of the original town still remaining at either end of it.

This, however, is not all. Some excavations, made some time since in the banks of the *ci-devant* lake, discovered several ancient coffins, hollowed out of calcareous stone, a mode of sepulture belonging to a very early epoch. And further researches in the bed of the former lake brought to light an entire house, which was buried four feet beneath the present level of the soil. It had two stories, and the rooms were all square. They were all paved with small octagon tiles of very red brick, and were filled entirely with fine, black mould, such as is deposited, in the course of ages, by water. In the lower story, the complete furniture of a blacksmith's forge was found, furnace, pincers, &c.

From these evidences it can hardly be doubted that some such convulsion of nature as the legend relates had, at some remote period, proved fatal to the inhabitants of buildings, which occupied the space between the present town of Les Herbiers and the suburb of Le Petit Bourg; although it may be doubted whether the good missionary of St. Felix had any hand in the matter.

The antiquaries of La Loire Inferieure would fain claim for their department the ancient Herbadilla, and maintain that it was situated where the large lake of Grand-lieu now is. But the weight of the evidence, which M. Masse Isidore, the author of letters on La Vendée, goes into at great length in his notes, seems decidedly to bear out the claims of the town of Les Herbiers to the honour of having been swallowed up by an earthquake.

Since this catastrophe, the town has never regained any portion of its former wealth and importance. It may be doubted, indeed, whether the narrator of St. Martin's miracle has not greatly exaggerated the riches, grandeur, and luxury, it enjoyed previously to its destruction. But it must, at all events, have been considerably larger in extent, if the present town and the faubourg above mentioned are the two extremities of the former city.

But the absence of importance has not, in this case, been compensated by the tranquillity and peace of obscurity. Few parts of France, if any, have been more unceasingly vexed by war and tumult than this rural, quiet-seeming sylvan La Vendée. During the long wars between England and France, it had its full share of sufferings. Under Francis I. the country was distracted by the long and obstinate resistance which it opposed to an attempt on the part of that monarch to encroach on its ancient peculiar franchises. The war which this gave rise to lasted till the time of Henry II., who put an end to it by withdrawing the officers of his customs, and confirming the disputed privileges. This long quarrel, obscure and unimportant in the general history of the kingdom, busy, during the period, with matters of more universal interest, was termed, by the historians, "the salt war;" the tax on salt having been one of the principal points of litigation.

This war, though, however unimportant in its general results, was, as a Vendéean writer remarks, far from being so in its action on the character of the people. A long course of desultory warfare, with the habits and tastes it engendered, and a successful struggle

against authority, prepared the people of La Vendée to take the part they did during the long wars of religion, which succeeded in their country so quickly to the conclusion of the Salt war. It is curious to find a population, now one of the most catholic in France, then standing in the foremost rank of the professors and defenders of the reformed doctrines. The country became almost entirely protestant; and there is scarcely a village on its surface, the possession of which was not disputed between Montpensier, Mayenne, Mercœur, and their adherents on the one side, and Rohan, Sully, Soubise, Lanoue, d'Andelot, Biron, La Trémouille, Condé, or Henry himself, on the other. It cannot be doubted that the taste for adventure and excitement, which had been fostered by the previous long wars and the love of independence, engendered by the maintenance of their local rights against their sovereign with arms in their hands, had, to the full, as much to do with the part La Vendée took in the great religious quarrel as any preference for the doctrines of Calvin to those of Rome. In fact, throughout France, the contest was to the full as much a political as a religious one. Freedom of conscience is too intimately allied with political

liberty for the people of France not to have felt that they were contending for something more than the ascendancy of certain religious doctrines over those of another creed ; and on the part of the leaders, although it cannot be denied that there is every reason to believe that some of them were influenced by purely patriotic motives, it is nevertheless but too clear that, with perhaps one or two exceptions, all were animated by feelings of personal animosity and rival ambition.

My friend, the landlord, and I, continued our walk, till it was time to return to meet at dinner the same party who had breakfasted together in the morning. We found them all assembled but one. The old royalist shop-keeper was missing ; and his absence was shortly accounted for by the tidings that he had expired suddenly about an hour before. One would have thought that the daily companionship of years, at the morning and evening meal, would have formed a strong tie between the members of a small party. But no strong feeling seemed to be elicited by the news of their old comrade's so sudden death. " Mon Dieu !" said the tax-gatherer. " Cependant il avait très bien déjeuné," said the judge, And so we sat down to dinner.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Journey to Bourbon-Vendée—Les Quatre Chemins—Notable Spot in the Vendéean Wars—A Specimen of French Coachmanship—Les Essards—Marguerite de Clisson—Henry IV. at Les Essards—Destruction of the Chateau—Adieu to the Bocage—The Plain of La Vendée—La Ferrière—Its Ancient Iron Mines—Their History—and Former Celebrity—Their subsequent Abandonment—Scenery and Soil of the Plain—Arrival at Bourbon—Conductor's Account of our Mishap at Les Quatre Chemins.

THE next morning, at half past three, I left Les Herbiers by a diligence which carries the mail between Saumur and Bourbon Vendée. About three leagues from Les Herbiers this road crosses that from Nantes to Bordeaux, at a spot called "Les Quatre Chemins." Both these roads were, at the period of the Vendéean war, mere narrow paths, as the term "chemins" still testifies, passing darkly and solitarily through the forest, which then covered the country in this neighbourhood for several miles around. This was, therefore, a spot admirably adapted to the mode of at-

tack practised by the Vendéens ; and accordingly it was, over and over again during the war, the scene of bloody engagements, in almost, if not quite, all of which the Vendéan troops were eminently successful. Even yet, near the side of the road, may be seen long mounds, which cover the remains of the numbers who perished at the too celebrated "Quatre Chemins." Rusted fragments of broken arms, and various other "débris" of destroyed armies, are still frequently found in moving the soil.

The aspect of Quatre Chemins is entirely changed at the present day from what it was forty-seven years ago. The four paths have become good wide roads, a little hamlet has sprung up at the point where they cross each other, the forest has fallen back to a distance, and a stone obelisk has been raised in the centre of the four ways to perpetuate the remembrance of the many memorable encounters which that spot has witnessed.

It was about five o'clock when we arrived there, and a fine bright morning was holding out fair promise of a blazing day. I was in the coupé of the diligence, together with one other man, who was fast asleep, as we drove

up to the obelisk at a good brisk trot, with our three horses placed unicorn fashion — a pair of wheelers and one leader. We advanced in a direct line to the obelisk ; and, as we neared it, I was surprised that we moved aside neither to the left nor right ; but I thought that our Jehu was going to exhibit some “*tour de force*” of French coachmanship, and that he was one of those whom the “*meta fervidis evitata rotis*” delighted.

I had not, however, many moments to speculate upon the matter, for up we drove direct upon the obelisk. The leader just stepped aside, avoiding it himself, but went on, totally regardless of those behind. The off-wheeler, being blind, poor brute, ran directly against it, reared bolt upright, and then began plunging and kicking. The other being also blind, and getting alarmed, did the same. The pole broke — my companion in the coupé was jerked forward by the shock with such violence, that his head was dashed through the window in front of him, and he woke out of his sleep to see one of the horse’s hind legs within an inch of his nose. I being awake, and in some degree prepared for a catastrophe, contrived to keep my seat. The

driver and conductor above, who had both been of course fast asleep, began flogging, screaming, and swearing like madmen. But it was all in vain. The ship had struck, and it was impossible to get her off the rocks. All the passengers got out; and at last we contrived to get the horses loose from the carriage. The one who had run against the obelisk was a good deal injured; but the broken pole, and other damage done to the vehicle, seemed most to distress the conductor and driver.

In the mean time I could not help laughing violently at the extreme absurdity of the thing. My ill-timed merriment made all the Frenchmen, passengers and all, exceedingly savage; but it was impossible to help it. The idea of a coach and horses running full butt against a stone edifice in the middle of the road, in broad daylight, was so exceedingly ridiculous, and the grotesque distress and clamorous lamentations of the lazy lubbers, by whose negligence the calamity had befallen, were so truly comic, that I strove in vain to exhibit a countenance decently harmonized to the general expression of chapfallen distress which characterized those of my companions in misfortune.

It was nearly an hour before things were sufficiently repaired to enable us, “*fractis discentes currere remis*” to proceed to Bourbon.

Soon after leaving this fatal spot, to the list of whose melancholy souvenirs we had thus added a new and memorable misfortune, we passed the village and ruined chateau of Les Essards. This was one of the terrible Marguerite de Clisson’s strongholds; and here, also, the unfortunate Jean V. of Brittany — that de Montfort, whose scrupulous fulfilment of his three vows that he made during his long captivity has been related in a former chapter — was dragged, in his passage from prison to prison, by the implacable Marguerite and her sons. The entire history of this imprisonment, with the frequent secret journeys which the princes of the house of Penthièvre took with their prisoners from one part of the country to another, and the means which the friends of the Montforts adopted to trace them, would make a romantic tale well worth telling, if time and space were less inexorable. But the story is too long a one to be told just now.

Two hundred years after this, Les Essards had a still more distinguished inmate. It was

in the time of the wars of religion. Mercœur, with his Ligeurs, was at Saint Georges de Montaigu, and the Calvinists were gathering their forces to oppose him. It was in this campaign that the youthful prince of Bearn, Henry of Navarre, first assumed the command in chief; and it was at Les Essards that the boy-general awaited La Trémouille and the troops he had been raising in the pays de Talmont. Henry was some days at this chateau; and these old walls, now for the most part lying in ruin on the elevated mound which raised the feudal stronghold above the cottages that form the village around it, then contained also Sully, Biron, Lanoue, Bellegarde, and others of that rarely equalled band of chiefs, who sustained so long the reformed party in France. In a few days La Trémouille brought thither his forces; and then the little army, under the command of the prince, exulting in his new dignity and importance, sallied forth in search of Mercœur, who retreated before them from Saint Georges de Montaigu towards Nantes; till, at the foot of the old tower of Pirmil, which still stands at the entrance to the bridge over the Loire opposite to that city, the Huguenot troops overtook him, and gained

a signal victory, as may be seen in de Thou's history, and the memoirs of d'Aubigné.

Les Essards remained standing till 1793, when it was burned down by the republican troops.

A little beyond Les Essards the style of the scenery changes, and the traveller perceives that he has quitted the Bocage. The road crosses some extensive moors; the district, generally, is much less wooded; and brown, instead of green, is the prevailing colour of the face of the country. This part of La Vendée, in contradistinction to the Bocage and the marais in the neighbourhood of the coast, is termed the plain.

The soil of this part of the plain is strongly metallic; and the most inexperienced eye perceives that there must be iron in the neighbourhood. In fact, the remains of ancient works are still to be seen; and the name of a little village about half way between Les Essards and Bourbon, La Ferrière, unites with other evidence to prove that mines in this region were worked by the Romans. It is impossible to conjecture at how early a period these mines, which afterwards became celebrated, may have been opened. "Peut-

être," says M. Massé Isidore, " que le sein de cette terre a produit jadis les armes éclatants qui brillèrent dans les mains des Annibal et des Scipious, des Marius et des Scylla. Peut-être même que long-temps avant Brennus vint y chercher ce glaive pesant qui fit pencher la balance au pied du Capitole."

But it is not till about the eleventh century that history makes any mention of these mines; and they are then spoken of as the finest and most valuable in France. It was from the bosom of these fields that the heroes of the crusades in a great measure drew their armour of proof; and on the fields of Jerusalem, of Bysantium, and of Antioch, and the ramparts of Joppa and Ascalon, might probably to this day be found portions of their produce, transported thither on the broad breasts of the ancient lords of Lusignan, Vouvant, Clisson, La Trémouille, and Châtillon. In the days of Philip Augustus, the iron of the plain of La Ferrière was still famous; and frequent mention is made, in the lays of the Troubadours, of the magnificent armour of knights and paladins, manufactured from the iron of these mines, whose site is still marked by dark mounds of scoria, yet uncovered by the herbage. It is probable that

they were not abandoned till the wars of religion devastated the country, and deprived it of the greatest portion of its most skilful and industrious artizans.

As we approached Bourbon, formerly called Roche sur Yon, from an ancient fortress built on a rock on the banks of the little river Yon, the country becomes somewhat less wild and sterile in its character than it is in the neighbourhood of La Ferrière, but is still strongly contrasted with the exuberant vegetable richness and woodland beauty of the Bocage. It is an open undulating country, not absolutely a plain, though called such from its contrast to the unceasing alternation of hill and valley in the Bocage. The soil is, for the most part, a mixture of clay, sand, and calcareous earth, reposing on a bottom of tertiary rock, which contains a large portion of shells and other fossilized remains, and is by no means deficient in fertility.

We reached Bourbon between eight and nine. I did not perceive that our dilapidated condition excited much sensation among the stable-men and loiterers of the inn-yard into which we drove; but I heard afterwards, in the evening, the conductor relating to the inmates of the inn-kitchen a history of the

accident, considerably differing from the version of the story which I could have given, had I felt myself called on to tell the truth, and the whole truth, of the matter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Bourbon Vendée—Its Appearance—Its Origin—La Grande Place—The Barracks—Bourbon Vendée a Failure—Its Population—Fair Day—Popular Amusements—Popular Morality—Abbey of Fontenelle—Beatrix de Machecoul—Her Legend—Her Epicurism—Her Cook—Her Repentance—Miracles Performed at her Tomb—Journey to Fontenay—Present Appearance and Past History of Fontenay—The Colliberts—Their Origin—Mode of Living—and Dwellings—Ideas concerning them—The circumstances of their Existence Unique.

BOURBON VENDEE is, beyond all comparison, the very ugliest town I ever saw. Every element of form, arrangement, colour, and condition, most displeasing to the eye, have contributed their several shares to render it an unequalled chef d'œuvre of hideousness. As this, however, is mere matter of opinion, it is but fair to say, on the other hand, that the French call it “une assez belle ville, bien bâtie, bien percée.” In truth, there is not a corner in it that is not a right angle. It is entirely bran new. Every vestige of “vilaine gothique” antiquity has been cleared away;

and this, to French taste, is quite sufficient to constitute a "belle ville."

The last vestige of the old chateau, and almost the entire village of Roche sur Yon, were destroyed by the republicans in 1793. In 1805, a capital was wanted for the new department of La Vendée, and Napoleon, who thought that a town could be created forthwith by his will and a sufficient quantity of bricks and mortar, in a situation where the population of the country and the wants and habits of society had not formed one. set to work and built, as a French topographer says, "tous les rudiments d'une grande et belle ville, qu'il decora surtout de son grand nom." In fact, for the first ten years of its short life, it was called "Napoleon Vendée," and took its present name only at the restoration, in 1815.

The present town is exactly what one might naturally expect it would be from the arbitrary and hasty manner of its creation. A huge, oblong "place" forms the centre and principal part of it. From the sides and corners of this, eight or ten streets branch off at right angles in all directions. The houses are all dressed in line with most perfect precision; and if a drill sergeant had been appointed

architect-in-chief, the regularity, stiffness, and formality, could not have been more complete. The buildings which compose this square are almost all public edifices of some sort or other, each looking more mesquin and meagre than the other, and all having the appearance of being stretched out at the least possible expence to the greatest possible extent of front, for the purpose of making them go as far towards the composition of the proposed town as possible. A theatre, on the steps of whose portico the grass was growing, forms part of one side. A huge Hôtel de Ville, which seems deserted and shut up, stands opposite to a great barn of a church. A prefecture, a court-house, a "Mairie," and enormous barracks, surrounding a court in which a dozen regiments might manœuvre at once, occupy the most of the remaining space.

This last building has been constructed so much in haste, and with so little solidity, that it is already beginning to fall to ruins—new ruins, which are the most unsightly spectacle in nature. They are deserted, and apparently abandoned to their fate; and it is impossible to conceive any thing more hideously ugly and dismal than the effect produced by these interminable lines of uniform square windows,

cut in half-ruinous, dun-coloured walls, the very image of premature decrepitude and decay.

The remainder of the square is filled up with several large hotels, which appear to have but little business, and a few miserable-looking shops, which seem to have none.

“ Ici,” says the author above quoted, who, far from undervaluing the town, admires its buildings, and in every way makes the best he can of it, “ l’on a réuni tout ce qu’ il fallait pour bâtir des maisons, et forcer les Vendéens à y faire quelques voyages ; mais on a *oublié* d’y *fixer* ce qui seul fait la prospérité des villes, le Commerce et l’Industrie. On n’y rencontre qu’une usine ; encore est elle insignifiante ; point de manufactures, point de branches de commerce qui vivifient ; aucun spéculateur qui entreprenne ; tout y est mort ; on dirait que l’on n’a voulu élever qu’une ville de passage ; on n’y voit que des cafés et des auberges.” The population is composed, he goes on to say, of functionaries, military men, a few tradesmen who have come from other points of France, “ et presque point des Vendéens.” The writer seems to be as little aware as the founder of the town of the impossibility of “ fixing ” the elements of com-

merce and industry where nature has not prepared the way for them, and the condition of society has not produced them. The mighty conqueror might almost as well have commanded a Manchester or a Sheffield to arise on the banks of the Seine. Putting out of the question even the more directly creative branches of industry, in which the provisions of Nature must always play so important a part, it is very difficult, even where commerce exists, to turn it out of its old channels and habitudes; and to create a commerce, which the inhabitants of a country are not sufficiently advanced to feel the want of, must be the patient work of years, probably of generations, and cannot be effected by a decree, even though the potentate who wills it be backed by an entire nation's power of wealth and physical force.

And the proof of this fact, which the existence of Bourbon Vendée affords, appears to be the only useful purpose that has been attained by its erection.

Had I arrived at Bourbon on any other day than that on which I happened to reach it, its want of population, of movement, and life, would have appeared even greater than it did as it was; for it was the fair day, and that

had attracted a number of the peasants of the environs, some to sell, and some to buy oxen, and some merely to amuse themselves with a day's idleness, and such recreations as the fair afforded. These consisted in visiting a few stalls of itinerant dealers in rosaries and chaplets, bright, gaudy handkerchiefs from Chollet, coarse cutlery from Chatellerault, and coloured prints of saints and virgins, with their legends printed beneath them, published, for the most part, in Alsace.

There were one or two fiddlers, too, mounted on chairs, who, with their wives' voices to assist them, collected a little audience, and managed to pick up a few sous by singing to the accompaniment of their strains. Part of their trade consisted in selling copies of the songs they were singing; and here and there a young peasant lad or lass would purchase one of these, and with much gravity join his or her voice to that of the professional Orpheus.

But the principal attraction was a company of buffoons, jugglers, and conjurers, who had erected a close booth for their performances, with a stage in front, on which the male and female members of the troop from time to time displayed themselves, and amused the

crowd with their wit. A large number of old and young, men and women, citizens and peasants, were assembled in front of the booth, listening to one of the men, and appearing greatly amused with his eloquence; so I placed myself among the audience, and stood some time attending to his discourse. In such a place, and from such orators, one does not expect much refinement of wit, or even much propriety or delicacy of language; but I was utterly astonished at the infamous, gross obscenity which this man was talking, and to which a large crowd, containing many women, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, were listening with delight and applause! I was, I repeat, low as I had always deemed the standard of morality to be in France, perfectly and unfeignedly astonished both at the disgusting profligacy of the people who could listen with applause and pleasure, not merely to gross language—that would be of small moment comparatively—but to the most brutally impure ideas, the most licentious descriptions, and abominable maxims, and at the culpable apathy of the authorities in permitting it.

It is quite out of the question to attempt making an English reader perfectly conceive

how fully the performance of the miserable buffoon in question deserved the terms which I have used to characterize it. It is disagreeable to be obliged to sully pages written in the hope of their being read by the pure and good, with even the words necessary to describe the nature of these people's recreation. But the existence of such facts as those with which I have been obliged to offend the delicacy of the reader, and which of course there is no reason for supposing to be peculiar to the place or occasion of my witnessing them, is too important an index of the moral and intellectual condition of the people to be passed over in silence. I believe that even yet the local authorities of any town or parish in England would quickly put an end to any similarly mischievous and abominable performance; and I am sure that, even were they not to do so, no audience, except among the lowest dregs of our largest towns, could be obtained for it—far less one comprising women belonging to what ought to be the respectable classes of society.

I had soon seen enough of Bourbon Vendée, and would have quitted it forthwith had there been any means of doing so; but there was no conveyance to Fontenay, in which direction

my purposed route lay, before two o'clock the next morning. By this, therefore, I secured a place, and then set forth to occupy some of the intervening hours by a walk to the old abbey of Fontenelle, about a league and a half to the west of Bourbon. It is a fine old ruin, rapidly hastening to a state of still more complete destruction, not particularly picturesque from its position, but, like many another similar pile, still shewing sufficient traces of its past splendour, to make one of us little men of a mighty society look back with wonder and admiration, mixed with something like envy, to the days when a simple seigneur, one of those mighty men of a puny society, raised, as his sole work, such an edifice as this has been.

William de Mauléon, lord of Talmont, and Beatrix de Machecoul, his wife, founded the abbey of Fontenelle, in 1210; and the lady is still, though, perhaps, scarcely enviably remembered by the people of the neighbourhood. The popular tradition has canonized her, and termed her Saint Beatrix; and the legend, still potently believed by the peasants of the place, of the mode by which she achieved her saintship, is one of those that shew that no monstrosity is too absurd to be credited by a

people whose taste for the marvellous is pampered by the endless miracles and wonders of the Romish priesthood, while it leaves us utterly at a loss to conjecture its origin.

The Lady Beatrix, says the legend, was a great gourmette in her way. She was, as people often profess themselves to be, "fond of children." She liked them newly born, and dressed simply—on the gridiron; and she had a cook whose broiled babes were chef d'œuvres of the then infant art of cookery. But new-born infants are, fortunately, not so plentiful as new-laid eggs; and the lady of Talmont's daily dinner acted as a strong "check on population." Upon one occasion, when there was not a child to be had for love or money, it so happened that the cook's wife became the mother of a fine boy. It only wanted half an hour to dinner. His credit, his place—nay, perhaps his character, was at stake! And the struggle in his bosom, between the father and the cook, was tremendous. He looked dangerously at the child, as, eyeing its limbs professionally, he stood feeling the edge of his long knife with his thumb, and casting a side glance, from time to time, at the gridiron. But, at length, nature triumphed over art; and the cook yielded to the father.

At the same moment — so potent for good are the natural affections of our nature, when not interfered with by ambition, avarice, or professional pursuits, as is often the case with others, besides our poor cook—a pang of compunction shot through his breast at the thought of all the fathers and mothers, whose offspring he had dressed. He had never before known any feeling of tenderness but that of which his finger and thumb had been the medium ; but now — and (to use the language of a certain class of philosophers) “ it is one of those traits of unsophisticated humanity which reconcile man to his species” — a gush of pure feeling, like the stream which the mythic hero turned through the Augean stable, flowed through his soul ; and, dashing his white cap from his brow, he rushed into the presence of his hungry mistress, and spoke to her so eloquently of the impropriety of indulging, as she did, in the pleasures of the table, that she not only, with noble self-denial, renounced, for the future, the favourite luxury to which she was so partial, but determined to expatiate her past dinners by walking bare-foot on thorns, from Talmont to Fontenelle. So she caused a path to be thick set with long thorns, from one of these villages to the

other ; and, as soon as it was prepared, set out on her painful journey. Before, however, she had accomplished the four leagues of distance which she had set herself, she fell exhausted, and expired with fatigue and pain.

It is to be presumed that the lady Beatrix owes her canonization to the circumstances of her death, rather than to those of her life. But, considering the peculiarity of her character, it is somewhat strange that the especial miracle, which her tomb is to the present day famous for performing, should be the curing of infants' maladies. So it is, however ; and it is still the custom among the mothers of Fontenelle to bring their babies and lay them naked upon the cold marble tombstone of St. Beatrix. The effects are said to be frequently instantaneous, and are generally accompanied by strange shiverings and contortions.

I returned to Bourbon to dine, and go to bed almost immediately afterwards, seeing that I had to get up again at one, or a little after, and that I had been up since three that morning. I got into the diligence soon after two the next morning, and found my companions to consist of a public singer, tra-

velling from Nantes to Bourdeaux, and her husband. As it was still dark, I felt inclined to finish the sleep out of which I had been roused; and I should have had a very comfortable nap had not the poor lady, who was dreadfully afraid of catching cold and sore throat from the night air, set up a shriek every now and then, which would have wakened the seven sleepers, with a view of ascertaining whether she had lost, or was losing, her voice. She retained it, I am happy to say, in admirable preservation all the way to Fontenay, where we arrived about nine o'clock.

The first part of the road I passed in darkness; but if, as I suppose, the nature of the scenery is the same as that of the rest of the journey, I lost nothing. The greater part of the way is altogether uninteresting, the character of the country being very much the same as that on the other side of Bourbon.

Fontenay is a pretty, cheerful little town, which does not bear the same marks of ravage and destruction as do the most part of the villages of the Bocage. It is situated on the little river Vendée, from which the department is named, and is the largest town in it. Bourbon, the capital, has only 3900 inha-

bitants, while, at Fontenay, there are 7500. Its full style and title is Fontenay-le-comte, so called from the line of counts who possessed it during the middle ages. During the revolution, it changed its name to Fontenay-le-peuple; but resumed its old appellation as soon as the Fontenay people dared to do so. The church of Nôtre Dame has a very lofty steeple, which is the most prominent object in the town, and is a chef d'œuvre of lightness and elegance. The interior of the church is in no wise remarkable. A very few traces of its ancient chateau, once the favourite residence of the counts of Poitiers, remain. The spot where it stood, on an elevation above the river, is still marked by some ivy-grown fragments of walls, and the picturesque terraces and plantations of some private gardens which occupy the site mingle with good effect, as seen from one or two points, with the grey buildings of the town. In 1568, the catholics who were in possession of the place capitulated and rendered it up to the Huguenots, who immediately, in defiance of the terms of capitulation, massacred the whole of the garrison — conduct as imprudent and shortsighted as brutal and dishonourable. In 1574, the catholics retook Fontenay, and paid

back the outrage they had received with increased cruelty.

Not far to the south-east of Fontenay, among the marshes and dikes about the mouth of the Sèvre Niortaise, and on the neighbouring coast, may still be found a few remaining specimens of a race of people, now nearly extinct, which have engaged a good deal of the attention of the Poitevin antiquaries and historians. They are termed Colliberts, and have, under that appellation, been a distinct people from a period beyond the earliest records of history. Throughout the feudal period, they were never serfs or vassals; and, though the feudal maxim, "Nulle terre sans seigneur," could hardly be said to be broken through in their case, inasmuch as they lived almost entirely in their boats, yet miserable as their existence seems to have been, they never appear to have been inclined to change it for the less free comforts of their neighbours on the land. The most generally received and best founded opinion respecting these singular people is, that they are the remains of the indigenous tribe of Agesinates Cambolectri, who were chased by the Romans into the solitudes and marshy shallows, which abound in this part of the coast; and who,

not being worth the trouble of pursuing into their watery fastnesses, either then by the Roman conquerors, or at a subsequent period by the feudal lords of the domains on the neighbouring coast, have ever since continued free, according to the signification of their name, Colliberts, being derived from "Col," neck or head—and "libre," free.

They have always lived by themselves, never intermarrying or mixing in any other way with the surrounding population. They support themselves by fishing, and most of their families live entirely in their boats. Some few have constructed huts on the sand.

A number of strange ideas and superstitions existed with regard to them among the inhabitants of the neighbouring districts. They were believed to be Pagans ; and especially to worship the rain. It is, indeed, likely enough that they may have continued Pagans to a much later period than the other inhabitants of the country. But they have certainly been Christians, as far as a very dark ignorance would permit them to be, for several generations. This and other prejudices against them caused them to be in some sort a proscribed people, and, doubtless, tended to perpetuate the perfect isolation of

them from the rest of the population. " Ils avaient," says an historian of the neighbouring abbey of Maillezais, " pour toute fortune des barques, des filets, quelques cabanes ; encore etaient ils obligés de les abandonner souvent à l' immersion des eaux. Ces déplorables restes des Agesinates Cambolectri erraient alors sur les grèves désertes ; mais ils étaient libres ; ils avaient à discretion l' air, le soleil, la mer ; et nul dans ce monde ne pouvait leur imposer de serviles travaux."

It is not surprising that a race so characterised, and existing under such circumstances, should be hastening towards extinction. It is in accordance with a law that all experience seems to prove universal in such cases, that it should be so. There are many other instances of the descendants of a distinct race having preserved their distinctive peculiarities in the midst of another people, both races being nearly equal in point of civilization. But I know no other case of a tribe remaining almost in a savage state in the immediate vicinity of civilization for so long a period as that during which the Colliberts of Poitou have existed.

The cause of this singularity is, probably, to be found in the fact that these unfortunate

outcasts possessed nothing whatsoever to execute the cupidity of their more civilized and more powerful neighbours. But the natural tendency of every population to increase is not, in their case, sufficiently strong to struggle against the numerous checks incidental to their habits and miserable mode of life. And in a few years the Colliberts will, in all probability, have disappeared from the face of the earth, without their extinction having been accelerated by any acts of the neighbouring population.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Abbey of Maillezais—The See—Its Removal — Reason for not having a Bishop—Subsequent Fate of the Edifice — Foundation of the Abbey — Emma, Duchess of Aquitaine — Relics — Abbot Theodolin and St. John's Head — Count Hugh's Munificence — St. Rigomer's Tomb—A Midnight Flitting — The Convent Cook —Geoffroy Grant-Dent—His Parentage and Early Life—Advocates of Monasteries—Geoffroy's Persecution of the Monks—The Monks quit their Convent—Geoffroy burns the Abbey—The Abbot's Journey to Rome--The Papal Interdict in the Middle Ages —Treaty of Peace between Geoffroy and the Abbey—A Mistake of Rabelais—Portrait of Geoffroy—Pantagruel's Remarks thereon—Lawyer Tiraqueau—His Epitaph.

NOT far to the south of Fontenay is the once celebrated abbey of Maillezais, of which there still remain sufficient ruins to make it worth while to traverse the inconsiderable distance which separates them from that town. Maillezais was formerly the seat of a bishoprick, and continued such till the middle of the seventeenth century. At that period, the city, as it had once been called, had become a mere village, and a poor one, and it was determined by Pope Innocent X. and

Louis XIV. to remove the bishoprick to some town more competent to support its dignity. The first idea was to transfer the episcopal seat to Fontenay-le-Comte, and the intentions of the pontiff and monarch were communicated to the favoured town.

But the worthy burghers of Fontenay having met in high council, and deliberated maturely on the matter, begged leave to decline the honour proposed to their town, alleging that the residence of a bishop, and canons, and seminary, &c., would, in all probability, raise the price of vegetables in Fontenay. "De peur," says an historian of the abbey, "que leur présence ne fit enchérir les légumes."

It is to be presumed that the reason assigned by the citizens of Fontenay for declining the honour of being erected into an episcopal city, appeared a good and sufficient one to their superiors, for their wishes were attended to, and La Rochelle was fixed on as the seat of the bishop who had hitherto sat at Maillezais. In the bull of Innocent, for the translation of the see, La Rochelle is spoken of as "Oppidum Rupellense, circuitu amplum, muris circumdatum, domibus magnificentum, habitatoribus repertum, et opibus

abundans." All these may be very good reasons for establishing a cathedral church there ; but it is remarkable to find the bull going on to recite, as an additional claim of the town to the new cathedral, " plures ecclesias in co existere." The see was accordingly transferred to La Rochelle in August, 1648 ; and Jacques Raoul, the last bishop of Maillezais, was the first of the new bishoprick.

But the good bishop loved his old cloisters of Maillezais, and, as soon as he had been enthroned, returned to his old residence. All the canons, too, remained in their old church, and Maillezais continued to be, in all but name, the real seat of the bishop. As this, however, was not what had been intended, Louis XIV. issued an ordinance, on the 30th of May, 1664, which commanded the entire suppression and secularization of the ancient abbey. This decree decided the fate of the splendid church. A few monks, who deemed that the ordinance of a king could not release them from the obligation of vows which had bound them not to him but to heaven, still remained, and, for the brief residue of their waning existence, lingered about the ancient church and cloister like ghosts haunting the scenes of their former habitudes. But these,

one by one, soon dropped off, and were buried by their surviving brethren beneath the vaults, which were already beginning to crumble above their heads. And, when the last monk of Maillezais was laid to rest among the dust of the generations of his predecessors, the old church was far on its progress towards decay.

For a hundred years and more the magnificent edifice, with its seven steeples, three towers, and four spires, advanced, though surely, yet slowly, to destruction. Then came the revolution, which, of course, put the finishing hand to its ruin; and the tombs of long lines of its bishops and benefactors, saints who had worn out whole lives in prayer and penance in its cells, and powerful princes, bold barons, and belted knights, who had hoped to purchase heaven cheaply by dying in monkish garb within its walls, were overwhelmed in one common destruction and oblivion by the ruins of the mighty nave, which had for so many hundred years spread its wide vault in time-defying majesty above them.

Scarcely a house throughout the country for miles around, a barn, or a farm-yard wall, but is built from materials pillaged from the

old abbey. It became a quarry, to which the inhabitants of all the neighbouring district resorted on every occasion. And each succeeding year did somewhat towards the utter demolition and disappearance of the remains of the edifice; till, in 1834, a society of antiquaries took Maillezais under their protection, and transported to the Museum at Niort some of the most curious and portable of the relics, such as several tombs, morsels of rich sculpture, &c.

The chronicles of the abbey of Maillezais contain a great variety of curious notices, illustrative of the state of society at the different periods of its early rise and meridian splendour; and the circumstances of its foundation are not among the least characteristic of their epoch.

Maillezais was one of those numerous foundations of the tenth century, which were indebted for their endowments to the devotion aroused by the idea, then generally prevalent, that the world was drawing near its end. Sovereign princes abandoned their states to devote themselves entirely to the practices of religion; and rich seigneurs hastened to endow religious foundations with their wealth, in order that they might be found at the last

day in a state of meritorious and apostolical poverty. Many charters of monasteries, founded in the latter half of the tenth century, are still extant, as, I think, some English historian has observed, beginning with the words, “*Mundi termino appropinquante ruinisque crebrescentibus.*”

The founder of Maillezais was the learned and beautiful Emma, daughter of Thibault, count of Blois and of Chartres, and wife of William, duke of Aquitaine. Emma was a prodigy of erudition and intelligence for the age she lived in, and was, therefore, of course attached to the church, the sole fountain of learning, and protectress and instructress of the learned. Immediately after his marriage with this gifted lady, the duke of Aquitaine retired with his wife to the forest country in this neighbourhood, to enjoy for a space a short respite from the cares of sovereignty, and the sport which the extraordinary quantity of boars and other game, which then abounded on this coast, afforded. But his spouse looked on these solitudes with very different eyes, and conceived the idea of founding, in the midst of the then desolation of the place, “an asylum where the pious, who aspired to communion with God, might come to

pray, and the unfortunate, who were weary of the world, to die." Full of this pious scheme, she persuaded her husband to give her for the purpose the whole of the lands between the Sèvre and the Autise; and soon the sound of the axe was heard amid the primeval woods, and the click of the mason's chisel, instead of the cries of wild animals, and the less frequent sound of the huntsman's horn, awaked the forest echoes.

It was not long before a noble church and monastery arose amid the surrounding forest; and the fair foundress then addressed herself to her friend and relative, Gauzbert, abbot of the Benedictine convent of St. Julian the Martyr, at Tours, requesting that he would supply the new establishment with a colony of his monks, and with an abbot. This dignity was, by his recommendation, conferred on the modestly-learned and piously-austere Theodolin.

Nothing now remained wanting to the completion of the good work, but the consecration and dedication of the new church. This was undertaken by Gombaudo, Archbishop of Bourdeaux; and a fête day was fixed for the ceremony. A vast number of bishops, abbots, and priors, many from great distances,

were assembled. The deeds, by which the duke and his duchess endowed the monastery with several broad lands, and villages, and vassals, were then read publicly in the church, which was afterwards consecrated and dedicated in due form to St. Peter.

When the ceremony was concluded, the duke took the opportunity of so many dignitaries of the church being assembled there, to request them to bless a little chapel, which he had founded hard by, in honour of St. Hilaire. They all accompanied the duke for this purpose; and it was then that the lady Emma, as the chronicles tell, lingering behind the rest without being observed, and giving the bishop of Poitiers a sign to remain with her, took the opportunity of hiding secretly, in that prelate's presence, several holy relics, which she had been for a long while past hoarding up with great care for this purpose, in a secret spot of the monastery, thus hallowing the edifice by the virtue of their presence, though that fact was known only to the bishop of Poitiers and herself.

This extraordinary caution was by no means absurd or unnecessary in such cases in those times. We have in our own days heard of certain most unexceptionably respectable gen-

tllemen, who have deemed that in secreting and purloining a unique book, a highly desired autograph, or a rare print, they were demonstrating their ardent love of "virtu," rather than any propensity to vice; and who seem to have considered such matters fair game. Now a similar exception to the general rules of honesty seems to have been held to exist during a portion of the middle ages, with regard to relics. These much coveted articles were the objects of more frequent thievery than almost any other species of property whatever in those days; and the vast trouble taken, large sums paid, and endless plots laid to obtain possession of them, are proofs that, though doubtless vast quantities of such "tromperie" were manufactured for the edification of the devout, more especially in the later ages of the period referred to, frauds of this description were still not simple matters, or every day occurrences, to be played off at will as often as a new object of excitement was wanted to gratify the people's taste for the marvellous.

The archives of this monastery of Maillezais do not proceed through many years before they present us with a case in point. During the lifetime of the virtuous and ex-

emplary Theodolin, the first abbot, it was noised abroad that the head of St. John the Baptist had been found at Angeriac. This was then the name of the little town of Saintonge, called ever since the event in question St. Jean d'Angély. In fact, the Abbot of Angeriac had found a man's skull under the foundations of an old wall, and called it that of the Baptist. The learned Ducange, however, who maintains that the veritable head of St. John the Baptist was in the church of Amiens, declares that the head found at St. Jean d'Angély must have been that of St. John of Edessa.

The abbot of Angeriac's find was, however, then questioned by none. And great was the confluence of men of all ranks and stations to see and reverence the sacred relic of the saint. Dukes, counts, and prelates thronged from all quarters; and Robert of Normandy is expressly recorded to have come from his northern kingdom, with a cup of gold and other rich gifts, for the shrine of the newly-recovered head.

Among the rest, our abbot of Maillezais, the good Theodolin, journeyed to Angeriac; and it may be feared that, as he travelled, certain envious thoughts, which tempted him to

covet this brother abbot's good fortune, insinuated themselves into the worthy man's mind, and tormented him by mingling themselves obstinately with the devotional thoughts with which he sought to approach the relic. In truth, he would have given his right arm to have possessed for his own monastery the object of the worship he was about to offer up in the church of a rival prelate.

When he arrived at Angeriac, he found an immense crowd of votaries, and the abbot, in doubt to whom he should assign the honour of touching the sacred bones, for the purpose of holding them up before the people. Theodolin immediately put in his claim to be selected for this honourable service; and his reputation throughout the country for piety and wisdom was such that the office was forthwith confided to him. He knelt and prayed long and earnestly, and then, approaching the altar, he reverently uncovered the holy skull, and, taking it in his hand, exposed it for two hours to the veneration of the assembled multitude. He then turned to replace it upon the altar. But as he did so, while his back was turned to the crowd, he seized a favourable moment for his design, and, suddenly wrenching a tooth from St.

John's jaw, he concealed it in his mouth, and thus got safe out of the town with it.

On leaving Angeriac, henceforward to be called St. Jean d'Angély, Theodolin travelled in company with Hugh count of Tours; and the noble was delighted with the instructive and interesting conversation of the ecclesiastic; so much so that at parting Count Hugh begged the abbot to tell him whether his monastery had all it needed, or if he could be of any service to him or it.

"The abbey is rich," replied Theodolin, "and thanks to my Lord Duke William, we want not for worldly goods. But alas! though we have store of gold, rich estates, and many vassals, we have scarcely any relics, and I know not how to procure any."

The count after a few moments' consideration replied: — "I have it! make yourself easy. You shall have some relics, and very excellent ones, too, as far as I can form an opinion. But judge for yourself. There was a man of God who formerly lived and died in my county of Touraine. His name was Rigomer, and I assure you his whole life was a series of miracles. In fact, he did little else but miracles. Well! my ancestors have preserved his bones, which are still lying in a

church which belongs to me. Take them; I make you a free present of them. They will, I doubt not, my father, be more useful in your possession than in mine; and you are heartily welcome to them."

Theodolin expressed his gratitude for so great a kindness, and promised to send one of his monks into Touraine forthwith to receive the rich present.

A few days after that an emissary from the abbot of Maillezais accompanied Count Hugh of Tours to the church of St. Rigomer; and the monk and the warrior began to labour together to open the tomb where the good man had been laid to his rest. The story, as it is told by Petrus Malleacensis, one of the chroniclers of the abbey of Maillezais, reminds one strongly of the scene at Melrose, in the Lay of the Last Minstrel, where bold Deloraine and the aged monk of St. Mary's aisle together rifle the tomb of the departed wizard. According to the account of the old legend, the good Rigomer was no less affronted at being disturbed in his long sleep than Michael Scott. For as the knight and the monk raised the stone which covered the place of the saint's repose, the thunder burst above their heads, and rolled through the aisles of

the church, as though it would never cease. The vaults of the building seemed to shake, and twice the heavy stone escaped from their hands, and fell back into its former place with a terrible dull hollow bang.

The men who had been brought to assist in opening the grave, crying out that St. Rigomer evidently did not like being moved, and that the relics must be left where they were, fled in dismay. But the bold knight feared nothing; and what would not a monk of St. Benedict have dared in the eleventh century for the honour and glory of his convent? So the count stood firm at the head of the grave, with his drawn sword in his hand; while the monk, in a transport of zeal, was only animated to labour the faster by the portents around, and dug away with fury till he reached the coffin. The bones were then placed in a casket, which had been brought for the purpose, and the two midnight labourers left the church in haste, the knight to return to his castle, and the monk to make the best of his way with his prize to Angers, where Theodolin was anxiously waiting for him. The relics were transported thence to Maillezais in great pomp by a procession of the monks, and amid the great rejoicings of the populace.

Some time later, about the latter part of the 12th century, we find a curious record of a dispute between the abbot of Maillezais and an individual named Séguin. This person laid claim to the appointment of master of the kitchen to the abbey, as belonging to him by right of succession from his ancestors, who had held that post for several generations. In fact, the place of master of the kitchen had become in many abbeys hereditary in the families of those to whom it had been originally granted by the abbots. The appointment was even termed a fief; and this circumstance is worth observing, as it affords a curious instance of the preservation of the old meaning of the term, which was originally synonymous with *benifice*: — “*feodum seu beneficium*,” and signified merely a recompense or reward for any service done, or the emolument attached to any office. All the great dignities, employments, and appointments of the crown were thus in the early days of the feudal system termed fiefs. So it seems that the claim of M. Séguin was not altogether void of plausible grounds.

But Abbot William, who then governed the abbey of Maillezais, was a bit of a *bon vivant*, and protested vehemently against being sad-

dled with an hereditary cook, who grounded his claim to that important office, not on his culinary capabilities, but on his pedigree; and insisted upon making a new appointment. The cook was firm on his part; and would by no means relinquish his right to the heads, feet, neck, and entrails of every beast killed in the abbey, as well as sundry perquisites and advantages attached to the place. At last, however, the churchman was by the advice of his chapter advised to give in for peace sake; and M. Séguin triumphantly returned to the honours and emoluments of the kitchen.

But the most interesting portion of the records of this old abbey is that which relates, with all the simple straightforward naïveté of the medieval chroniclers, the grand quarrel between the abbot and monks of Maillezais and the terrible Geoffroy Grand-Dent.

This Geoffroy was himself a sufficiently notable personage. He lived in the first half of the thirteenth century, and has, in his day, figured as a hero of romance, as well as occupied a place in the page of history. The latter informs us that he was the son of Geoffroy of Lezignem, or Lusignan, by Eustache, daughter of Thibault Chabot, lord of

Vouvant, Mervent, etc. The former makes him the son of the celebrated Mellusina, the fairy of Poitou, so famous in the pages of romance. In fact, Mellusina was no other than this same Eustache, whose learning, power, and wealth, together with the use she made of it to raise several mighty fabrics, castles, churches, and fortresses, gained her the reputation of a fairy among the impressionable men of that day.

Both historians and romancers agree in representing her son Geoffroy-with-the-great-tooth in no very amiable light. According to the romances, he began his terrible career by biting, with precocious teeth, the breasts of his nurses, so that they died from the wounds. At seven years of age he amused himself by putting to death his vassals for no reason but for the sport of seeing them die ; and, later in life, when his brother, Troimont, who was of a quiet, studious, contemplative disposition, embraced the monastic life, he was so enraged at any member of his family bringing upon it what he deemed such a disgrace, that he burned down the abbey which had received his vows.

His quarrel with the abbey of Maillezais, however, is matter of history, and arose ori-

ginally from his pretensions to certain rights over it, which he claimed by succession from his mother. Most abbeys, during the middle ages, had some protector chosen among the neighbouring seigneurs, and termed the *avouée*, or advocate of the monastery. It was his duty to be its defender against all danger, oppression, and wrong, and to take care of its temporalities. This protection often came to resemble the wolf's protection of the lamb, as may be easily imagined. The "avouerie" of an abbey, as it was called, was found to be a profitable matter, and was often disputed among rival potentates, while the abbey was frequently exceedingly anxious to escape from its *protector* altogether.

Now, the lord of Vouvant had been *avouée* of the abbey of Maillezais; and as Geoffroy Grand Dent was the son of his only child, he claimed, in her right, the "avouerie" of it himself. The monks did not at all like the idea of being protected by such a formidable patron; and hence the long and fierce persecution which they sustained at his hands. Neither by day nor by night were the unfortunate monks secure from his outrages. While they were assembled in the chapel for the performance of the sacred office, the iron clang

of his own and his followers' tread would make itself heard in their peaceful courts, as, in the execution of some suddenly conceived plan of annoyance and vexation, he strode with unrestrained and unresisted insolence through the convent. As they sat at their frugal meal, in the common hall, his ominous form would scare them from their seats. And each monk, in his solitary cell, laid him down to his short repose in dread of being waked by the fierce lord of Lusignan, with some new outrage of fire or sword.

The abbot of Maillezais had no weapon wherewith to retaliate on his enemy but the spiritual one of excommunication; and Geoffroy Grand Dent was excommunicated. But what recked the fierce and haughty baron of the poor churchman's curse? It served but to irritate, without in the least subduing him; and the monks could no longer inhabit their convent with safety of their lives. His vengeance was especially directed against their abbot, the excellent and prudent Raynald, who at last came to the determination of quitting his convent with as many of his monks as were willing to accompany him, as the only means of saving his life and their's.

Such a resolution involved much of unwonted danger and privation. The world was, in those days, little else than one vast battle-field; and the cloistered cenobite, who, from any cause, was sent forth from his convent to wander among its dangers, ignorant alike of the manners, and even of the localities of the world around him, was as much exposed to mischief, as much lost amid the confusion, and stunned by the tumult of his new and uncongenial position, as a retired student of our day would be, if suddenly placed in the midst of contending armies, on the field of a pitched battle. It was only, therefore, as the least of two great evils, that such a resolution could be adopted. The speech which the good abbot addressed to his monks on the occasion, in which he announces his determination, and invites them to accompany him, has been preserved by the chronicler of the abbey; and it indicates, with much naïveté, the good man's ignorance of the world into which he was about to wander forth, and of the nature of the expedition on which he had determined.

After encouraging his intimidated flock with several reflections on the uncertainty of life, and the ubiquity of death's visitations,

from which they were not secure in their monastic cells, any more than amid the tumult of the world without, he goes on to say : —

“ We shall, perhaps, remain for a long time wanderers, my sons ; hungry and naked, perhaps, in a strange country ; but, at least, Lezignem will not have our heads. For our passage through the bands of our enemies we will take, my children, our robes of ceremony, the cross of God, and the relics of our saints, and we will walk in procession, as if we were advancing to the altar ; we will walk forwards, turning neither to the right nor to the left. If the barbarians respect our misfortunes, if they let us pass, we will go to weep for Maillezais in some far-distant land. And if they close their ranks upon us, brothers, we know how to die.”

All the old monks left the monastery, with their abbot, but most of the young ones — “ *timentes pro pellibus suis* ” — as the chronicler sneeringly expresses it, chose to remain. One might have expected, perhaps, that exactly the reverse would have been the case.

Shortly after the departure of the old monks, Geoffroy appeared at the abbey-gates with a troop of soldiers, and was admitted by the young members of the community who

had remained. They entered into parley with him; and, on their swearing solemnly that the sentence of excommunication should be taken off him, he consented to withdraw himself and his troops. The young monks had sworn to do that which they had no power to perform. But when the good Raynald, who had wandered, it seems, to Poitiers, and been there hospitably received by the brethren of a Benedictine convent, heard of the oath of the younger members of his flock, he wished, for the sake of their consciences, to make good their promise. But the archdeacon of Aunis, who, it seems, had been appointed judge of the quarrel, by the holy see, would, by no means, permit any such step to be taken.

Geoffroy Grand Dent, thus deceived and disappointed, became more terrible and more outrageous than ever. Every monk that he could catch was put to death; the abbey was utterly pillaged and abandoned; and, at last, in July, of the year 1232, he set fire to the buildings, and left them in flames, while he scoured the country in all directions, to discover and exterminate the fugitives.

It was then, says an historian of Maillezais, that, in all probability, Geoffroy acquired his terrible renown and his fearfully significant

nickname of the great tooth ; for, assuredly, he then shewed his teeth to some purpose.

At this crisis, Raynald, as a last resource, resolved on a journey to Rome, for the purpose of laying his complaints and grievances at the foot of the papal throne. For the holy father was bound, not only as defender and protector of the universal church, but more especially as patron of the abbey of Maillezais, for it belonged immediately to the holy see, and was not dependent on any other bishop, to redress its wrongs and put down its oppressors with a strong hand. On hearing the long story of grievances, persecutions, and outrages, which Raynald had to tell, the holy father was shocked and indignant, and hesitated not to lance his most terrible thunders at the obdurate culprit.

The pontifical interdict was, during the middle ages, a weapon of awful and tremendous power, and one which was rarely wielded without effect. Even if the sinner was hardened or bold enough to despise the mere personal excommunication which cut himself off from participation in the rights and sacraments of the church, the terrible interdict put in operation against him other and more irresistible means of coercion than the stings of

his own deadened conscience. If the baron could meet death on the field, or await it on the bed of sickness unassoilzied, unconsolated by religious hopes and good men's prayers, and unprepared by Christian sacraments for his great change, his vassals could not; and when many years of oppression and wrong have failed to wear out the long suffering patience of a bad lord's miserable vassals, the dreaded interdict, that for his faults struck them from the book of that life to which all their hopes of happiness, stretching across the weary dead level of their misery here, pointed, has often sufficed to raise them in a body in open rebellion against him, and thus force him to reconciliation with the church.

So it was in the present instance. The interdict was pronounced against all the baronies, lordships, and possessions of the terrible Geoffroy; and every priest was forbidden throughout their extent to bury the dead, or absolve the dying, or christen the newly-born, or perform any of the offices of the church. In all the cursed land, no bell with sacred cheering sound was heard, no symbol of religion seen. Throughout the archiepiscopal provinces of Sens, Bourges, Tours, and Bourdeaux, on every Sunday and on every festival,

the curse was read publicly to the people, while the bell was rung backwards, and the lighted tapers were extinguished, as the officiating priest concluded the dreadful form of anathema with the solemn words—"and as I now shut this book, so may he be shut out from eternal life; as these tapers are extinguished, so may his soul be extinguished in utter darkness! Fiat! Fiat! Fiat! In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti, et auctoritate sacræ sedis Apostolicæ. Amen! Amen!" In any church, if the cursed man himself appeared, the service immediately ceased, the lights on the altar were extinguished, the congregation fled, and the church was left deserted.

This was a condition too terrible, a state of moral leprosy and isolation from his fellow-creatures too tremendous for even the reckless spirit and fierce pride of the lord of Lusignan long to endure; and he was shortly fain to reconcile himself to the church, and make his peace with Abbot Raynald and the despised monks of Maillezais. A regular treaty was executed between them. It is too long to give at length, though it is curious in many parts, going into long details respecting many minute claims, rents, and charges,

about which he and the abbey had differed ; all of which points he entirely concedes. The instrument begins thus: " I, Geoffroy, lord of Vouvent and Mervent, hereby make known to all, that, having insulted and persecuted the Abbot of Maillezais, his monastery, and his men, I have merited the excommunication which has so long afflicted me. Now, for the salvation of my own soul, and those of my family, I restore to the abbey all its possessions, so often ravaged ; and I give to it, also, some of my own." He goes on to enumerate a number of gifts, immunities, and privileges, which he confers on the monks, and concludes by saying, " If by any possibility I should at any time have the weakness to retract any of these concessions, or if any of my successors should act so unworthily as to injure the monastery in any way, I ordain that justice should be done, and double restitution made within the space of one month."

The turbulent baron does not seem to have reflected that his will and injunction were scarcely likely to prove more binding on those who were to succeed him, than the deeds of gift, and charters of privileges bestowed on the monks by his predecessors, had been on him. Yet, how common is the same mistake !

and how frequently do we find the pride of man's short-lived will pronouncing a mocking satire on its own humiliating impotency, by vain attempts to dispose things in such and such a manner "for ever!"

Geoffroy put himself out of temptation by departing for the Holy Land, there to find a licensed arena for his turbulence and love of excitement and storm. He returned to pass the evening of his life in tranquillity, and die on his own lands, where he was buried in the church of Vouvent, as is testified by an existing fragment of his will, by a letter of one of his executors, and by a discharge given to them by Valence de Lezignem, his daughter, which all mention the fact. Some time afterwards, the monks of Maillezais, notwithstanding all the reasons which one might have thought would have been sufficient to render the recollection of his name not particularly pleasing to them, erected a magnificent cenotaph in their church to the memory of Geoffroy de Lezignem, lord of Vouvant, of Mervent, of Moncontour, and of Fontenay.

Rabelais, therefore, has mistaken this cenotaph for a tomb, where he says, in the fifth chapter of his second book, vol. ii., that Geoffroy was buried at Maillezais.

There was, some time since, discovered among the ruins of the old abbey, a stone head of remarkably hideous and terrible expression, the features of which are accurately reproduced in the annexed print, copied from a lithograph made at Niort, to illustrate a history of the abbey.



There can be little doubt that it was intended to represent the features of the terrible Geoffroy-with-the-great-tooth; and I have thought it worth while to have his not altogether prepossessing physiognomy inserted here, principally because it forms a curious and interesting illustration to the following passage of the immortal biographer of Pan-
tagruel.

“Gefroy de Lezignem, dit Gefroy la Grand-Dent estoit enterré à Maillezais, dont print ung jour campos pour le visiter comme homme de bien. Et partant de Poitiers avec aucuns de ses compaignons, passarent Ligugé, visitant le noble Ardillon, abbé, par Lusignan, par Sansay, par Celles, par Colonges, par Fontenay le Comte, saluant le docte Tiraqueau; et de là arrivarent à Maillezais; ou visita le sepulchre du dict Gefroy la Grand-Dent, dont eût quelcque peu de frayeur, voyant sa portraicture; car il y est en imaigne comme d’ung homme furieux tirant à demy son grand malchus de la guaine. Et demandant la cause de ce, les chanoines du dict lieu, luy dirent que n’estoit aultre cause sinon que ‘*pictoribus atque poetis*’ c’est à dire que les painctres et les poètes ont liberté de paindre ce qu’ils veulent; mais il ne se contenta de leur response; et il dist, Il n’est ainsi painct sans cause, et me doubte qu’à sa mort on lui la fait quelcque tort, du quel il demanda vengeance à ses parents. Je m’en enquesteray plus à plein, et en feray ce que de raison.”

If any curious reader should feel an inclination to learn any farther particulars of this redoubtable Geoffroy, I must refer him to the

curious romance entitled the "Histoire de Mellusine la Fée du Poictou," where he will find, amid the strange and quaint fancies of the romancer, several curious illustrations of the history of those days and places.

The learned Tiraqueau, whom Pantagruel stopped at Fontenay to salute, was one of its most remarkable natives. He was a famous lawyer; and after having been for some time "lieutenant-civil" of Fontenay-le-comte, and then counsellor of the parliament of Bourdeaux, he became a member of that of Paris, and was employed in various important matters by Francis I., and Henry II. He died at a very advanced age, in the year 1558, leaving behind him thirty sons and a vast variety of works, which have been collected into five large folio volumes. It was said of him that he never let a year pass without presenting to his country a new citizen and a new book. He was a great water-drinker, and never made use of any other beverage—a circumstance which explains the allusion of the fifth line of the following epitaph which was made on him.

Tiraqueau fécond à produire
 A mis au monde trente fils;
 Tiraqueau fécond à bien dire
 A fait pareil nombre d'écrits.

S'il n'eût pas noyé dans les eaux
Une semence si féconde
Il eut enfin rempli le monde
De livres, et de Tiraqueaux.

I intended to have returned to Fontenay, from Maillezais, in time to have gone on to Niort by a little diligence which was to leave Fontenay that evening, but was too late. I was obliged, therefore, to take up my quarters for that night at the not particularly excellent inn at Fontenay, and secure a place in the earliest conveyance for the next morning.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Journey from Fontenay to Niort—View of Niort—The Chateau—M^e de Maintenon—Fairs of Niort—Companions in the Diligence—Primeval Simplicity—Character of the Country—St. Maixent—Convent Staircase—Poitevin Dialect—Hill of St. Maixent—Change in the Character of the Country—Lusignan—The Chateau—View from its Site—Its past Reputation—Mellusina—Brantôme's Reflection on her Character.

Two or three diligences run between Fontenay and Niort, a distance of eight leagues. The frontier line of the departments of La Vendée and Les Deux Sèvres is crossed about five leagues from Fontenay; and very shortly afterwards the traveller looks down on Niort, situated on the banks of its dull stream, in the middle of a wide gently-shelving valley, and can hardly believe that its spires are more than one or two miles distant from him.

The high grounds from which this wide view of the valley of the Sèvre is obtained are entirely open, and covered with vast wide-spreading corn-fields. The wheat crops, which

extended farther than the eye could follow them, seemed light, but clean and good, and well-eared.

The approach to Niort from Fontenay is in some degree picturesque, from the gardens which mingle on this side with the buildings of the town, the fine view of the extremely light and elegant spires of the principal church, and the bridge over the Sèvre. The corn lands cease with the high grounds, and the rich-looking soil of the valley is for the most part occupied with fine deep green pastures, shaded with a considerable quantity of wood, among which is a large proportion of poplar. The windings of the river, too, though the general characteristics of the stream are not such as contribute ordinarily to picturesque effect, as it meanders capriciously among the luxuriant herbage of the meadows it waters, add a not unpleasing feature to the general prospect from the high grounds which on this side border the valley.

The town itself has little of interest; and my stay there was only long enough to enable me to run into the church, and the ancient chateau, now the town-prison. The church, which was under repair, contained nothing remarkable but a very large altar-piece, which

some young provincial artist deemed worth copying, and was busily engaged in, perched on a high scaffold within the altar-rails.

The chateau consists principally of two finely preserved dungeon towers, each surmounted with several turrets; but the principal temptation which induced me to pay it a hurried visit, which cost me a good run, was the recollection that it was the birth-place of Madame de Maintenon. Her family, the d'Aubignés, were among the most illustrious knights of Saintonge; and her grandfather, Theodore Agrippa d'Aubigné, the favourite and comrade in arms of Henry the Fourth, distinguished himself equally with his pen and sword. He was gentleman of the bedchamber to the king, camp-marshal, and vice-admiral of Guyenne and Brittany, and the author of some of the best memoirs of the times of the wars of religion that we possess. The freedom of his tongue, as well as that of his pen, are said to have got him into disgrace with his royal master — a fortune which he transmitted to his son, who was imprisoned by the king—then Louis XIII., in the chateau of Niort, to which place of confinement his wife, Jeanne de Cardillac, accompanied him; and in that gloomy abode gave birth to that

Françoise d'Aubigné, who was destined afterwards to sway the destinies of France.

Niort is celebrated for its fairs, at which a considerable commerce in cattle and grain, and more especially in the celebrated mules of Poitou, is transacted. These matters, however, do not constitute the only, or perhaps the principal celebrity and attraction of the fairs of Niort. They are also frequented by the peasants from many a league around as a market for wives. For every mother fails not to take thither her daughters as soon as they have turned their fifteenth year;—"not," says a French writer, M. de Vaudreuil, "pour les y vendre la corde au cou, comme les maris vendent leurs femmes en Angleterre,"—but to let them see and be seen, and introduce them to the beau monde. Thus the age of a girl in the neighbourhood of Niort is usually computed by fairs. "Elle à tant de foires, plus quinze ans." So that if any mother should be so injudicious as to bring her daughter to market earlier than the understood age of fifteen years, the young lady is sure to suffer for it in the opinion of the public; for the number of fairs at which she has appeared are never forgotten by her compeers, and the invariable fifteen years is always computed in addition to these as the sum of her age.

I left Niort about one o'clock in the day in a diligence bound for Poitiers. My two companions in the coupé were a couple who had been married that morning, and were going to spend the honeymoon at Poitiers. I pitied them so much for their want of luck in not having the coupé all to themselves, that I should certainly have taken myself off to any other place in the diligence, if there had been one vacant. But there was not, and I was obliged to content my benevolence with looking very steadily out of the window on my side of the carriage. We had not, however, travelled many leagues before I discovered that my delicate attentions were utterly thrown away upon them, and altogether unnecessary. For I found that an observation of them, as attentive and minute as Sir Joseph Bankes could have bestowed on a flea, when he wanted to prove it to be a species of lobster, by no means embarrassed the young couple, or prevented their indulging in all sorts of connubial endearments and matrimonial toying as freely and unconcernedly as if they had been Adam and Eve, and I a Megatherium. After this had continued some two or three hours, the husband went fast asleep in his corner; and his poor wife was

fain to content herself with playing with his hair, which every now and then made him wince and start as it tickled him ; upon which occasions he would knock her hand from his face, as a man strikes a fly from his nose that disturbs him in his sleep.

During the first part of the journey, the road, as soon as it has left the immediate valley of the Sèvre, passes through an open country, cultivated in large fields of a light calcareous soil. There are few vines and few trees, with the exception of those which border the road. These are for the most part chestnuts, cherry-trees, and elms, and have some very fine timber among them.

Between five and six leagues from Niort is the town of St. Maixent, which, though merely a chef-lieu de canton, and not honoured by being the seat of a sous-prefecture, is yet the second in importance in the department. The town lies to the right of the road, which does not pass through it ; but there is nothing at St. Maixent which ought to cause the traveller to pause in his route. This I was enabled to ascertain by our conductor's fears of the octroi officers of St. Maixent. For we had two more than our proper number of passengers ; and a little before arriving at the

town barrier, therefore, the conductor begged that some of his passengers would get down and walk through the town, as if they had nothing to do with the diligence. I volunteered for this service, and thus was enabled to pay a flying visit to the little place.

The Saint Maixentians boast much of the possession of a certain staircase in the ancient convent of the Benedictines, and speak of it as an extraordinary chef d'œuvre of architecture. I repented, however, much the long run which my visit to it cost me; for the day was hot, and the vaunted staircase, as I thought, in no wise remarkable. The ancient Poitevin language is said still to be spoken at St. Maixent, and in the neighbourhood in greater purity and perfection than in any other part of the ancient province; and all the books extant in this dialect have been written by natives of this town.

Immediately on quitting the town, the road ascends a considerable hill, and the nature of the country changes entirely. We here quit the calcareous soil of the rich basin, which extends from the foot of these hills across the southern part of the departments of Les Deux Sèvres, and La Vendée to the sea, and enter upon a poorer but more picturesque district.

Instead of the soft, chalky, mud-making material on which we had travelled from Niort to St. Maixent, the road is henceforward of flint. The fields are smaller, more divided by hedges, and tillage is not so universal. Wheat is rarer, and rye more frequent; and the country is more varied by woods, commons, and gorse thickets. The surface of the soil is far more varied by the alternations of hill and dale; some of the valleys are picturesquely steep and narrow; and the deep green foliage of the chestnut in increased abundance adds to the apparent richness of the country, though in fact it is less fertile, and its produce less valuable than that of the basin we are leaving behind.

From the top of the hill of St. Maixent there is a fine view over the country the traveller has traversed between Niort and that place. The little town itself, with its ramparts and modest promenade, occupies the foreground of the picture, and the broad valley of the sinuous Sèvre is marked far away in the distance by its margin of green meadows, among the brown and yellow extent of wide-spread corn crops, which cover the most part of the soil of this wide and fertile basin.

From St. Maixent to Lusignan is seven leagues. The road crosses the frontier of the departments of Les Deux Sévres and Vienne, close to the little village of Villedieu, which is somewhat more than half way between St. Maixent and Lusignan. The latter town, celebrated as being the residence of the famous Mellusina, is picturesquely situated on the little river Vonne, in a steep and narrow valley. The famous castle, which the Poitevine fairy built for her residence, and of which so many wonders are related, has long since been razed to the ground. Its site, still marked, however, by some trifling remains, and now occupied by a public promenade, is easily recognized on the hill-side; and the view thence of the little town beneath it, of the narrow valley, the river, and the wooded bank which rises steep on the opposite side, is pretty enough to make it well worth a traveller's while to mount to it.

This castle was long deemed impregnable, till Coligny took it during the wars of religion in the 16th century. "C'était," says garrulous old Brantôme, "la plus belle marque de forteresse antique, et la plus noble décoration vieille en France." In speaking of Mellusina, he rejects boldly as fables all

the marvellous narrations which the romancers relate concerning her; but adds quaintly enough: — “Eh bien! que ce soient des fables, si ne peut-on dire que tout beau et bon d'elle.”

The country between Lusignan and Poitiers is of the same character as that already described on this side of St. Maixent, with perhaps still more wood. We made but poor progress through this hilly district; and it was eight o'clock before we reached Poitiers.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Arrival at Poitiers — Dinner with two Landlords — Walk through the Town — General Appearance of Poitiers — Its Position — Valley of the Clain — High Rocks in the neighbourhood of the Town — View of the Town thence — Dolmen near Poitiers — Change in the face of the Country — Description of the Dolmen — Notice of it by Rabelais — University of Poitiers — Its Institution — and Prosperity — Academical Manners in the Middle Ages — Parisian Academical Manners in the Nineteenth Century — Anecdote from the History of the University of Poitiers — “The Battle of the Books” — Triumph of the Pandects — Mild Discipline — Return to *Les Trois Piliers*.

ON my arrival at Poitiers, I found the landlord of the inn to which the diligence took me—*Les trois Piliers*, I think it is called, but am not sure — just about to sit down to dinner, late as it was, with a brother landlord, from Melle, who had arrived but a few minutes before us ; so another knife and fork were added to their table, and I dined with the two landlords, profiting much by their instructive conversation, and by the *extraordinarily* superior quality of the *vin ordinaire*.

The waiter, strongly impressed with the greatness of the difference between landlords and customers, had placed by my side a different bottle, containing, doubtless, a specimen of the much more ordinary *vin ordinaire*, which I make acquaintance with at the public table the next day; but this shortly vanished in obedience to a sign from the host. The principal subject of conversation between the two bonifaces, who appeared to be jointly concerned in the horsing of certain diligences, was the establishment of steam-boats on the river Charente; and doleful were their complaints of "beggarly accounts of empty benches," and of the impossibility of competing with that "vilaine vapeur." Still more lamentable were their anticipations of total ruin to themselves and the country at large; and each sigh over the approaching downfall of diligences and France was followed by a brimming glass of the good Bourdeaux wine.

The next morning early, before breakfast, I sallied forth into the town, and soon lost entirely all idea of the direction in which I was walking, for a more perfect labyrinth than that formed by the streets of this curious old city it is impossible to conceive. There is

not, to the best of my belief, one single straight street in it. The various "places" are of no regular form; and the whole plan of the town, if plan it can be supposed to have ever had, is a phenomenon of unmatched irregularity and confusion. A great number of streets wind about in the most free and easy meandering manner imaginable between high, dead walls, enlivened with a door, or, possibly, high up a window, from time to time, at long intervals, and not a single opening into them of any other street from one end to the other. The town is very large for its population, of about twenty-three thousand souls; but still it frequently strikes one as extraordinary that so many long, narrow streets should have room to coil about thus like a heap of snakes, without interfering with each other.

The city is situated on a rounded eminence, surrounded almost entirely by the two rivers Vouneuil and Clain. The latter of these is a considerable stream, and falls, lower down, into the Vienne, at little above Chatellerault. A narrow neck of land, separating the valleys of these two streams, connects the hill on which Poitiers is built with the high grounds, to the south-west, in the direction of Lusig-

nan, and admits to the city the only road which reaches it without descending into the deep valleys that surround it, and again mounting a steep ascent into the town.

Across this neck of land, and descending from it into the valleys on either side, the old walls of the town are still remaining in good preservation. To the right of this spot, looking towards the town, is the site of the old castle, now a handsome, public promenade, with a very fine terrace running along the former ramparts, and looking perpendicularly down on the valley of the Clain, which runs at a great depth below. This river flows round three sides of Poitiers, at the bottom of a deep ravine, the side of which, opposite to the town, is in great part formed of perpendicular rocks. These are highest and most remarkable to the east of the city, and several very picturesque sketches of bits of the town and river, with some of its mills, rivers, or bridges on it, and parts of the rocks, might be made from various points of the valley.

I wandered down the hill in this direction, till I found myself at the edge of the town, and on the bank of the river. Then, crossing the Clain by one of the four bridges which here communicate with the other bank of

it, I found, with some difficulty, a path to the top of the rocks, from which there is a very fine view of the city. Though these rocks rise above the course of the river in vast, naked, perpendicular masses, they have nothing rough or craggy in their appearance, but resemble a wall of hewn sand-stone; while, at the top, they are covered with equable and level soil, and present the appearance of a wide table-land occupied with cultivated fields, in which there is nothing to warn a stranger advancing across them from the opposite direction of the existence of the precipice so near at hand, till he finds himself on its edge, and sees the city covering the lower eminence on the other side of the river beneath him.

A walk along the top of these rocks shews great part of the town to much advantage. The cathedral and the ancient church of St. Radegonde are both situated on this side of Poitiers, and the spires and towers of several other churches are seen behind them, rising from amid the confused mass of building which covers the hill, whose form, as seen in this direction, resembles that of a very much depressed dome. Poitiers possessed, up to the period of the revolution, an unusually

large number of churches. Some of its historians boast that no other town in France contained so many ; and, to the present day, a number survive which I do not think any other French city, except Paris, could match.

At a short distance, not more, I should think, than a quarter of a league, from the town, across the fields in this direction, is a huge dolmen, marking imperishably that here too those ancient forest-priests held their despotic sway, and immolated on these hills their victims. But the face of the country must be entirely changed since this colossal altar, for the last time, steamed with human blood. For the mysteries of the Druids were truly, and in every sense of the word, mysteries ; and their haunts were either among the wild and almost inaccessible rocks and promontories of some remote and unfrequented shore, as in Brittany, or in the deep recesses of some sacred forest, untrodden, save by the initiated. At the present day, the fields around this dolmen are entirely open. Scarcely a tree is to be seen. But the existence of the old stone declares, that when it was placed here, some fifteen hundred or two thousand years ago, this hill must have been covered with forest.

There are several other dolmens, or "pierres levées," as the peasants term them, in this part of the country, and some menhirs scattered throughout the department of Vienne; as indeed is, more or less, the case in every part of that wide district, which I have, in a former chapter, defined, as the portion of Gaul, inhabited by a race in whom physiologists can still trace the characteristic type of the Celtic stock. The dimensions of the altar in question, though inferior to some of those I have seen in Brittany, are colossal. The table-stone, which has formerly been supported by five rough, upright stones, is upwards of twenty feet long, by seventeen broad, and, I should think, about a foot and a half, or two feet, in thickness. This enormously heavy mass has, by some means, at a period to which tradition does not reach, been dislodged from its supporters at one end, which now rests upon the ground, so that the upper surface of the stone presents a steep, inclined plane. It is probable that this was done by the early preachers and converts, in their vain attempts to destroy memorials which are still likely to last for a period of years equal to that of their past duration. But the dolmen of Poitiers is charged with other souvenirs besides those of

its constructors and the mysterious rights of their sombre and blood-stained worship. For other scenes, doings of a very different description, and merrier times, has the old stone witnessed, in the days of its old age. For here it was, as the old curé of Mendon tells us, that the gay young academicians of Poitiers were wont to come on holidays and festivals, to enjoy a merry repast in the open air, which presented, in those days, a sufficiently attractive contrast to the atmosphere of the town, and more especially to that of the rush-strewn crowded schools and small, densely-inhabited chambers of the students, in most of the universities of the middle age.

The university of Poitiers was principally noted as a school of civil law; and, in the year 1511, we find it recorded that it became so flourishing, that students came from all the provinces of France, and even from other kingdoms, to study, under its professors, the Roman code. The number of scholars, we are told, was so great, that the lecture-rooms could not contain them; and many were obliged to receive their lessons at the door, and even outside the building. It was found that many were driven, by these inconveniences, to go and pursue their studies at

other universities; and the city authorities were obliged to enlarge the buildings of the university, and build galleries around them to keep the students under cover.

The university of Poitiers was not an ancient one, having, at the period of its flourishing condition above referred to, been in existence eighty years; as is shewn by the date of the bull of pope Eugenius IV. for its erection, which is March the 29th, 1431.

Of all the scenes of medieval life and manners which we are able to glean from the writings of old annalists, who, in composing their interminable records of uninteresting names and monotonous facts, had nothing less in their thoughts than any idea of leaving us a picture of the ordinary every-day habits and mode of living of their time, none seem more startling, from their extreme dissimilarity to the notions and manners of the present day, or more strange, from the grotesque incongruities of places, times, persons and actions, which they often present, than the characteristic traits of academical life, which chance has here and there preserved, and which enable us to form some idea of the universities of Europe, during the middle-age period.

The universities of Europe, I have said, because it seems that, nearly up to the time of the first beginning of the reformation in England, the manners in the universities of most of the countries of Europe were very similar. But the change, from that time to the present, has not been nearly so great in any foreign university as in the two which England possesses. And it is probable that the anecdote of the law-school of Poitiers, which I am going to relate, might not appear so strange as it does to us English, to our highly civilized neighbours, from whose schools of Paris an obnoxious professor was recently, in this nineteenth century, hooted and ejected by his finely-educated and well-disciplined scholars, who, in the teeth of the government, and despite the exertions of a military force, sent by the authorities to quell the tumult and support the professor, carried their point triumphantly, and utterly refused to proceed with their studies, till a teacher more agreeable to them was appointed by their vanquished and obedient superiors.

From the comparison of this fact with the following history of certain events, which took place in the university of Poitiers in the sixteenth century, as related in one of the

letters of the learned Longueil, who was one of the professors of civil law at that period, it should seem that academical affairs have retrograded rather than progressed on the other side of the Channel, inasmuch as it will appear that at Poitiers, in the sixteenth century, the teacher, and not, as at Paris in the nineteenth century, the *untaught*, was the victor in a quarrel which fell out between them.

A considerable number of distinguished persons in the University, says Longueil, had requested him to give the lecture with which the term was to open. On the day fixed for this purpose, and, at the usual hour, which it seems was one o'clock, he mounted the rostrum, and commenced explaining, to a numerous auditory, the twenty-eighth book of the Pandects. But he had scarcely begun his lecture before a large body of young Gascon scholars rushed tumultuously into the room, with drawn swords in their hands, and cried out to the professor to descend from the chair forthwith, and resign it to the master whose lecture in the ordinary course usually began at that hour. Longueil refused to move, notwithstanding the threats of instant death with which the young rioters threatened him. "I

counted," he says, "on the assistance of my auditors, who were about six hundred in number. But all this multitude, being unarmed, contented themselves with abusing the intruders, and exhorting me to stand firm."

One of the young men, seeing that he made no movement in obedience to their summons, sprung up the steps of the lecturing chair, and, seizing the professor by his gown, would have forced him to descend. But a well applied kick of the indignant doctor's heel in his face knocked him backwards, and sent him sprawling on the floor. Another young Gascon, furious at the discomfiture of his comrade and compatriot, rushed forward towards the chair to avenge his ignominious fall.

"Then," says the professor, who seems to relate his exploits upon the occasion with infinite self-complacency and gusto, "fortune favoured me with arms wherewith to defend myself. Before me, on the desk, lay three enormous volumes of the Digest, which we call '*Infortia*.' I seized the first of these, and launched it at my adversary with so much force and vigour, that I knocked him over, quite smashed by the blow — *que je le ren-*

versai tout meurtri du coup. A third follows," continues the bellicose professor, getting animated with the recollection of the fray as he proceeds with his story, "and he meets with no milder reception than his predecessors. I fling my second volume at his head, and put him *hors de combat.* Meanwhile, the tumult was increasing, and the confusion becoming greater every instant, a fourth assailant sprung towards my tribune, and, catching the top of it with his hands, would have swung himself up, and then, being once within it, would have been more easily able to have thrust me from my chair. But I smashed his fingers with my remaining volume, and thus made him let go his hold, and fall to the ground, without any wish to try the experiment a second time. Thus, contrary to the expectation of those present, in the sight of all men, for once and away, at any rate, 'arms yielded to the gown;' and I, for my own part, was astonished to find myself alive and victorious. At length, my audience, encouraged by my successes, no longer contented themselves with cries, menaces, and abuse, but, arming themselves with the benches and whatever else they could lay their hands on, fell furiously upon the intruders. Some tore up

the pavement, and flung it at their heads; and by these means soon compelled them to fly, covered with wounds and ignominy." Thus ended this notable battle of the books, wherein Justinian and the Pandects reaped new laurels. "Et tel," concludes the worthy doctor, "fut le fruit de leur brutale expédition."

The dispersed rioters hastened to hide themselves in the various holes and corners, which most cities then offered far more abundantly than in these days, to those who, from any cause, wished to retire from observation. Nor did they dare to shew themselves again soon, for it was not merely the shame of disgrace and defeat that they had to fear. The municipal authorities had inquired into the matter; and, as they never did these sort of things by halves in those days, had condemned them all to be hung. Longueil, however, magnanimously interceded for them with the magistrates. He was willing to consider the matter as a drunken frolic—the result of one of those merry repasts, under the old Druid stone, that Rabelais talks of,—and offered pardon to the whole of his late assailants, on condition of their undergoing some slight punishment. The ungrateful Gascons,

however, spurned his pardon, and refused all accommodation or submission to authority; and it was soon discovered that the Gascon professors, of whom there were several in the university, secretly fomented their obstinacy and rebellion from jealousy of the superior merit of Longueil. The consequence was, that all the Gascons in the university, professors as well as scholars, were ordered to quit Poitiers by a certain day, and never shew their faces within the walls of that city again. Their expulsion was rigorously enforced; and the banished Gascons divided themselves between the universities of Angers and Toulouse.

Leaving the dark-looking old dolmen, with many fancies in my head as to the speculations which that sly satirist and philosophical humorist, the quaint old curé of Mendon, may probably have indulged in while sitting under its shade, I re-entered Poitiers by the bridge over the Clain, by which the great road to Angoulême and the south reaches the city, and, with some little difficulty, found my way back, by a course as sinuous as that of a skater luxuriating in the large curves described by his outer edge, to Les Trois Piliers in time for a ten o'clock breakfast.

For once and away the morning meal made its appearance on the table punctually at the appointed hour. The guests were chiefly travellers passing through by diligence from Bourdeaux to Paris; and their arrival probably hastened that of the breakfast.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Poitiers—The Cathedral—Peculiarity of its Position — and Architecture—The Interior—Its Foundation—“ Foire au Lard ”—Consumption of Pork in Early Times—Inventory of the Treasures of the Cathedral in the Fifteenth Century—M. de la Roche Posay—Church of St. Radegonde—Tomb of the Saint — Legend of St. Radegonde — Curious Charter — Friendship of Radegonde and Fortunatus—Nature of their intercourse — Scandal in the Sixth Century—Subsequent Career of Fortunatus—Appearance of Our Saviour to St. Radegonde—“ Pas de Dieu ”—Probable Origin of this Tradition — Practices of the Hagiographers — Death of St. Radegonde.

AFTER breakfast I went to the cathedral, a building remarkable for its form as well as its position. It is, I think, the only metropolitan church I know, which, being in a city built upon a hill, is on the lowest, instead of the highest ground. The highest point of land within the walls of a town was almost invariably selected, by the early confessors and martyrs who christianized western Europe, for the site of their churches ; and the cathedrals will generally be found, however often they may have been destroyed and rebuilt, to

occupy the site of the earliest church in the district.

The cathedral of Poitiers, however, is situated at the eastern extremity of the town, almost at the foot of the hill, and but little above the level of the river. The form of the edifice is also singular. The two aisles are all but as high as the nave; and the east end is, unlike that of almost, if not quite, all the cathedral churches of France, square instead of circular. This broad extent of eastern wall, too, is rendered the more remarkable from its surface being broken by no projecting Lady's chapel. The aisles and the nave are all of considerable width—about 120 feet altogether—so that both the western and eastern end present an unusually large surface of wall. And the united result of all these circumstances is to give the entire building a heavy, square, dumpy appearance, very much at variance with the genius and character of gothic architecture. There is no part of the fabric that does not suffer in appearance from this departure from the ordinary forms and proportions of the generality of medieval churches. The elevation of the aisles, almost to an equality with the height of the nave, gives a barnlike look to

the entire structure, which is increased by a great want of elevation proportionable to the breadth of the building.

The first impression which the interior of the church produces, is that of great space ; but the effect is by no means a pleasing one. The eye seeks in vain the customary elegance of the long nave, tapering away in the distant perspective, and the graceful beauty of its distinct and perfectly subordinate though accompanying side aisles. The unusual height of these in Poitiers cathedral entirely changes to the eye the proportions of every part of the church. And though a stranger, on entering the building, feels himself to be in the midst of vast space, every part of the fabric seems to be out of place. The nave, low in itself, is rendered in appearance still lower, the length of the church is lost in its exaggerated breadth, and the air of squareness, which all this produces, is still more striking within than without the building.

This defect is rendered more glaring by the clerestory, or rather that which supplies its place, running around the external walls of the church, along the side aisles, and across the western wall, instead of occupying its usual graceful position above the arches of

the nave. To complete the misfortune, and render the dissightliness of the church as striking as possible, this clerestory, if such it can be called, which has been added quite recently to the construction of the cathedral, has been built, with an intensity of bad taste scarcely credible, after the fashion of a Roman balcony; and the western doorway has been decked in costume of a similar style to match it.

Altogether I received but little pleasure from Poitiers cathedral, except that which its old painted glass, of which it has several fine windows, afforded me. But, if not calculated to give pleasure by its beauty, the church of Poitiers is at least instructive as an example of the ill success which would attend any attempt at gothic architecture, in which the ordinary forms and proportions of the most exquisitely beautiful specimens of architecture, which human skill has ever produced, should be departed from.

The earliest cathedral church of Poitiers was burned, together with a great part of the town, in 1021. It was re-established by William, duke of Aquitaine and count of Poitou; but the present church, dedicated to St. Peter, was begun by our Henry II., who, to his

other titles and dignities, added that of count of Poitou. It was not finished, however, till some centuries later; and it is probable that the octagonal part of the mesquin towers was an addition of the fifteenth century.

There is held every Thursday at Poitiers a pork-market in the space in front of the cathedral; and it is curious to think that this "*foire au lard*," as the Poitevins call it, has been held every Thursday for near a thousand years; for we find among the archives of the church a charter, bearing date 1081, by which Geoffroi-Guillaume, duke of Aquitaine, confers on the chapter of St. Peter the tolls and customs which his officers received from the merchants who came to the fair before the door of St. Peter, "*et ad arcum*," and around the minster. The second place, designated as one of the localities of the market, was probably a vaulted gallery, in the form of a curve or arch, in front of the principal entrance of the church, such as that which existed till a late period at the church of St. Hilaire in this town.

In old times, the pork-market was a more important matter than it is in the present day, for at a very early period pig-meat was the principal animal food in use in France,

and probably in England also. The forests, which then covered so large a portion of either country, afforded food to vast herds of swine, which, guarded in the forest by many a "Gurth," formed the principal wealth of many a "Saxon Cedric." In the rich pastures of Buckinghamshire, now employed in the production of vast quantities of beef and butter for the metropolis, but which were formerly entirely forest-land, the names of Hogshaw, Hogtub Hall, and various other compounds of this elegant monosyllable, still indicate the nature of the former produce of the country. Saint Remi, the contemporary of Clovis, says in his will, that all his herds consisted of swine. Clotaire I., in an edict bearing date 560, in which he enumerates the grants he makes to the church, speaks only of the tithes of pigs. The name "bacconique" was given to a peculiar sort of dishes, on which pork was served at table, derived, says a French historian, "de l'ancien mot *bacon* ou *baccon*, qui signifiait un porc engraisé."

The following articles form part of an inventory of the treasures belonging to the cathedral of Poitiers, which was drawn up in 1406. The list will be thought not uninteresting by the curious in such matters.

A casket of pure gold, in which is enclosed a portion of the beard of the "prince of the Apostles," brought from Rome by St. Hilaire. This casket is adorned with four sapphires, five rubies, thirty-two large pearls, and sixteen diamonds. All these stones were given to the chapter by the Duke of Berri, Count of Poitou, in the 14th century.

The caskets of Saint Simplicien and Saint Florence, both covered with silver.

A casket of pure gold, adorned with precious stones, in which is a portion of the true cross.

Another reliquary of the true cross, of silver gilt.

Various other reliquaries, containing many sacred reliques, of silver gilt.

The heads of St. Andrew and St. Gregory, of silver.

Two volumes, containing the text of the gospels, covered on one side with gold and precious stones.

Several crosses, both those used in processions as well as others, of silver gilt.

Several silver vases for washing at the holy mass.

Several images in silver of the Virgin and the saints.

Many ancient mitres, adorned with precious stones.

Two sandals, one of which belonged to St. Peter, and the other to St. Martial.

One copper cross; or, as the original has it, "*Item quædam crossa cuprea pro innocentibus.*" From which it should seem, that the festival of innocents, or all fools' day, the nature of which is so well known to have had but small analogy with innocence or decency, was kept in this church as in so many others.

The cathedral was much injured and pillaged by the Protestants in 1562; and of all the riches here enumerated, and many more, there remained, when the calvanists fled from Poitiers, but one sapphire, which was found in the chapter-house.

In the first half of the 17th century, the see of Poitiers was held by M. de la Roche Posay, who made a great many rich presents to the cathedral towards repairing its losses. This prelate gave also several domains to the church, and founded four masses a week in the chapel of St. Andrew, and one high mass every Sunday during his life, in the express hope of being, in consideration of these good works, spared from sudden death. But this, as it happened, was the very end which Pro-

vidence had ordained for him ; and he died, despite all his masses, suddenly, on the 30th of July, 1651.

Immediately behind the cathedral is the church of Saint Radegonde, the most popular saint in Poitou. The west front of the church, the tower, and the nave, are of the fifteenth century ; but the east end, with its more massive forms, smaller windows, and obscurer light, is evidently of a much earlier period ; and the subterranean crypt, hollowed out of the rock beneath the high altar, certainly dates from a period not later than the twelfth century. In this sombre, low-arched cell, nearly half whose space is occupied by the immense thickness of the short pillars which support the edifice above, is the tomb of the sainted queen. The Protestants most indecently burned the body of the saint before the door of the church in 1562. But the crowd of worshippers is not the less around the venerated stone coffin, which reposes immediately under the altar. The devotees whom I found there were all women, and of the lowest classes of society ; but sufficient had been saved from their meagre and hard-earned means of subsistence to provide a multitude of little slender tapers of yellow, unbleached

wax, which were burning dimly before the tomb, and throwing a dull red light upon the stone and the surrounding pillars, and the wrinkled, hag-like features of the old crones, who sit every day and all day long before the shrine to sell to the votaries of St. Radegond candles of all sorts and sizes, and their prayers. The tomb itself was in many places worn by the touch of the multitudes who have worshipped at it through so many centuries ; and, though it might have been supposed that the lips of the dirtiest people could scarcely have conveyed much soil, the spot on which the devotees kiss the stone is marked by a stain of greasy-looking, polished appearance, and dark brown hue, which it must have required millions of extremely nasty kisses to produce.

Saint Radegonde, before she left the world, and sought tranquillity in a cloister, was queen of France. The story of her early life is not without a touch of romance in it. She was the daughter of Bertaire, the pagan king of Thuringia, and was taken captive at the age of ten years, together with many others of her countrymen and women, by Clotaire, the son of Clovis, when he was making war against that country. As she already pro-

mised to be extremely beautiful, King Clotaire caused her to be educated in the chateau of Atis in the Vermandois, where she was converted to Christianity, and in process of time became the monarch's wife.

The youthful beauty, however, was not calculated for the meridian of a court. She was unfeignedly religious, and made herself extremely unpopular among the courtiers by enforcing an unusual degree of moral strictness and regularity of conduct. Moreover, she harassed the king himself with remonstrances on the subject of his disorderly life; and, to crown all, she had no children; so Clotaire soon quarrelled with her, and she was glad to retire from court, and devote herself to religion.

She was attracted to Poitiers by the celebrity of the church of St. Hilaire, and there founded the monastery of Saint Cross. Now, it so fell out, that after some time her royal spouse took it into his head that he should like to have her back again; and so he came himself to Poitiers to fetch her home. The good St. Germain, however, accompanied him, and through his intercession Radegonde now not only obtained permission to remain in her cloister, but also succeeded in persuading her

lord and master to found a chapter and church under the invocation of Our Lady, which afterwards became the collegiate church of St. Radegonde. The charter of foundation of this establishment, preserved by means of a copy which the biographer of St. Radegonde inserted at the end of her work, is very curious. The royal sinner recapitulates all the crimes—or rather the principal and most glaring of them—which he had committed; the destruction of the church of St. Martin, the burning of his son Chrame, together with his wife and children, &c.; and he expresses his firm conviction of having made up for them, and expunged the long score of them by the foundation of sundry monasteries. He then proceeds thus, in a transport of remorse and terror—

“O Clotaire! miserable Clotaire! bowed down with years, and on the brink of the grave! What can I say! I blush for myself, and am stupified! O beloved father prior! in thee my soul puts all its confidence! O venerable congregation of clergy! in you is my only consolation! On the behalf of the Almighty, deign to accomplish my wish. Have always a common table, free from superfluities, and still more devoid of luxury!

Let your hair be neglected! Sing night and day the praises of the Lord! Visit sacred spots; and let your cloisters and your very beds be witnesses only of your prayers. I leave you to the performance of all these duties, under pain of the damnation of my soul, for which you will have to answer at the day of judgment."

The authenticity of this extraordinary document is suspected; but if it be not the production of Clotaire himself, it is that of an age but little posterior to his, and is equally curious as a specimen of the ideas and manners of the period.

Radegonde, notwithstanding her venerability as the foundress of a convent, was unfortunately still young and beautiful, and neither her exemplary conduct, nor sincere piety, nor even the endless succession of miracles she did upon all sorts of occasions, important and unimportant, could secure her from evil tongues. It is a great injustice to the Chinese herb to impute to its influences the love of scandal. Ladies were, I fear, as much addicted to scandal-mongering long before its introduction as afterwards; and I fancy that the taste for speaking ill of their neighbours must be attributed to the imbibi-

tion of a liquid of earlier date and fame—even milk from the breasts of mother Eve.

It so happened that about that time a young Italian priest named Fortunatus arrived at Poitiers, on his way from Italy, to visit the tomb of St. Martin; and, being there by some means led to the consideration that it was better to serve a living saint than pay an empty honour to a dead one, he remained in that city, and there—as Thibeaudeau, the historian of Poitou, expresses it:—“fut comme le secrétaire de sainte Radegonde.” He it was who wrote the letters to other communities, or to the ecclesiastical superiors of the convent; took whatever journeys the affairs of the monastery rendered necessary, and transacted the business of the establishment. He was frequently the fair Radegonde’s guest at table; and a frequent interchange of little presents, “dignes,” says the historian, “de la frugalité chrétienne,” such as fruits, flowers, prunes, or cream, took place between them. The presents of the young Italian, so appropriately named *Fortunatus*, were generally accompanied by some little piece of ingenious poetry, “d’un style, vif et enjoué;” “for,” adds the chronicler judiciously, “la vraie dévotion n’est pas ennemie de la gaieté.”

Nothing could be more delightful. The scene from the interior of the abbey of St. Cross, thus presented to us by the historian, forms a tranquil and flowery oasis in the turbulent wilderness of those rude times, which it is pleasing to look back on ; and the intellectual intercourse of two minds, which were among the most cultivated and refined of their age, must have been indeed precious to both of them amid the dearth of intellectual sympathy, and in the absence of any congenial spirit in the rough world around them.

It could hardly be expected that persons so superior to the herd, and so circumstanced, could escape the rancour of envious and ill-natured tongues. "Combien de gens," exclaims the worthy historian, "ignorent jusqu' où peut aller la sécurité de l'innocence !"

It is gratifying, however, to find that the insinuations of the malicious were not able to injure permanently the reputation of Radegonde or Fortunatus, or to impede their fortunes. For Radegonde turned out a great saint and extensive worker of miracles ; and the young Italian priest became Bishop of Poitiers, and is known as the only tolerable Latin poet of his day. He it was who was author of the still well-known hymn, begin-

ning:—"Vexilla regis prodeunt;" which was composed by him in honour of the occasion of the translation of a portion of the true cross into the city of Poitiers, which the Emperor Justinian II. had sent as a present to Rade-gonde, at her especial request.

One of the numerous legends of St. Rade-gonde relates that upon one occasion our Saviour appeared to her in person, and left the print of his foot upon the flagstone on which he stood. A chapel called the "Pas de Dieu" was built upon the spot, which has long since been destroyed. But the miraculously marked stone was removed from it into the church of St. Radegonde, and may still be seen there in a recess in the southern wall of the aisle, exposed to the view, but protected from the touch of the devout by cross bars of iron.

One of the designs with which the curious old manuscript that details the above occurrence is illustrated, represents St. Radegonde asleep upon the occasion of this vision; whence we may conclude, that, in all probability, the saint herself was innocent of any intentional deception in the matter. It was a dream; and one very likely to have presented itself to the sleeping fancy of the devotee. With ima-

ginations constantly excited by accredited accounts of miracles and visions of all sorts, with the physical functions deranged by long fasts, and prepared to assist in any deception which the fancy might attempt to play off upon the senses, and with implicit faith in the frequent occurrence of such events, and in their own worthiness to become the subject of a special interference with the ordinary laws of nature, the simple-hearted and hot-headed inmates of the earliest cloisters, were peculiarly liable, both from their mental and bodily condition, to be visited even in their waking hours by day-dreams, which impressed themselves upon the mind with such vividness of imagery, as to be very sincerely and genuinely mistaken afterwards for realities. And it is probable that a very large proportion of the *earlier* marvels which have been handed down to us in the hagiographies, and which are too indiscriminately attributed to wilful fraud, have originated in some such manner.

But then the foot-print? It is very conceivable that Fancy may have done its work there too. Or it is not improbable that this attestation of a fact, which, at the time of its occurrence, would have required no evidence

to render it universally credible beyond the saint's affirmation, was an invention of a later period. There is, indeed, every reason to believe that many of the historians of similar wonders, who wrote for a somewhat more critical and colder generation, were in the habit of dressing a little the stories of the old martyrs and Apostles which had come down to them, and seasoned their narratives to suit the more material taste of the less spiritually minded readers for whom they wrote.

St. Radegonde died on the 13th of August, 587; and has ever been from that day to the present the most favourite saint of the Poitevin peasantry, who still implicitly believe in the potency of her protection, and the miraculous power of her tomb.

Indeed, up to a comparatively recent period, the belief in the efficacy of St. Radegonde's intercession was not confined to the simple-minded peasantry of the neighbourhood, or to the limits of the province in which she is more especially worshipped. For there may yet be seen in her church a mural tablet, which records the pious foundation of sundry masses and processions by the mother of Louis XIV., in fulfilment of a vow made by her to the saint at the time her royal son lay dange-

rously ill at Calais. The saint's power was manifested upon that occasion in a manner which afforded the most irrefragable evidence of it to the most sceptical. For Louis forthwith got better, and eventually recovered.

But there are some obstinate people whom nothing will convince.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Poitiers—Churches — Notre Dame — St. Porchaire — St. Jean de Montierneuf—St. Hilaire—Birth and Parentage of St. Hilaire—Legend — Origin of Monkish Legends — Ancient Custom of the Chapter of St. Hilaire — Walk in the Valley of the Vouneuil—View of the City on this Side — Poitevin Mules—Description of one of the Sires — Its great Value — Cafés at Poitiers — Wax-work Show — Diana of Poitiers — Brantôme's Opinion of her—Ancient Mysteries at Poitiers—Michel Jean, Bishop of Angers—His Composition for the Stage.

FEW towns, as I believe I have already said, possessed so many churches as ancient Poitiers. An unusually large number have survived the revolution, and they are nearly all of them interesting either from their appearance of great antiquity, or from the peculiarities of their architecture. Notre Dame, with its very curious and richly ornamented west front, its quaint little steeples, and ancient Norman architecture; St. Porchaire, with its venerable-looking tower and antique porch; St. Jean de Montierneuf, with its interior, well and cleverly restored under the superintendence of the Poitevin society of

antiquaries, while the ancient monastery to which it belonged has been degraded into a cavalry barrack; and St. Hilaire, with its short plain pillars, grotesquely carved capitals, and round arches, are all of them well worth the attention and the pencil of the antiquary and architectural draughtsman.

This last church, though now possessing but small traces of magnificence or splendour, was the seat of one of the most celebrated chapters in the kingdom; the friendly rival and ally of the great and powerful collegiate body of St. Martin at Tours. St. Martin was the disciple of St. Hilaire; and the bond of intimacy and friendship which united the two saints continued through nearly fifteen hundred years to connect the rich establishments founded by them by the ties of various reciprocal privileges and good offices. St. Hilaire was born in Poitou, of Pagan parents, and was educated in all the learning of the latter days of the western empire. The result was his conversion to Christianity; upon which he married, and became in the middle of the fourth century Bishop of Poitiers.

As late as 1777, there existed in this city a stone built into a little pyramid, which stood in the middle of the street opposite to the Hôtel de

Ville, on which was carved a representation of a notable miracle, said to have been performed by St. Hilaire near the spot. The saint was passing through the streets, on his return to Poitiers after some absence, and the people came out of their houses in crowds, and thronged around him for his blessing. As he passed the above-mentioned spot, a woman ran out of her house so precipitately, that she left her infant child in a bath, and on her return found it drowned. Upon which she rushed back again into the street with the dead body in her arms, and, carrying it to the feet of the saint, explained to him how her eagerness for his blessing had caused the child's death, and besought him to restore it to life; which the good bishop forthwith did.

Now the legend states that up to 1615, the stone on which the representation of this miracle was carved was in the house where this event took place; thus presuming a house of the middle of the fourth century to be still existing at Poitiers at the beginning of the seventeenth. But this story, and many another such of the early Apostles of Christianity, took their origin at a much later period. It was the practice during the middle ages to exercise the novices in the monaste-

ries in writing *amplifications* on the lives of the saints ; and there is no doubt that a vast mass of the absurdities and fables which disgrace the Romanist hagiographies were originally due to the prolific imaginations of these young clerks, who treated their saintly heroes after the same fashion as the lives of the demigods were written by the heathen authors, whom they had read. The "lives" thus composed were laid up in the convent library, exhumed from their dust a century or two later, and then given to the world as authentic documents.

The friendship which existed between the chapter of St. Hilaire, of Poitiers, and that of St. Martin of Tours, was expressed by several regulations of a kind which frequently existed between the different religious bodies. Whenever a canon of St. Martin's came to Poitiers, he was invited to sit according to his rank in the choir among the canons of St. Hilaire, and, if it was a chapter day, to be present at the sitting in the chapter-house after mass. The stranger was, moreover, presented with six loaves of the best white bread, and six bottles of the best wine. This allowance was in 1635 changed to a present in money. Instead of the bread and wine,

two louis d'or were given to a dignitary, one to a simple canon, and half a one to inferior members of the chapter. They were also always invited to dine.

In 1707, the dean of St. Martin's came to Poitiers, and a deputation of two canons of St. Hilaire immediately waited upon him to invite him to attend mass in their choir, and to be present at the meeting in the chapter-house afterwards. At the conclusion of the mass, the two louis were presented to him by the verger, and he was then conducted to the chapter-house, where he had the dean's seat, and acted as president of the meeting. On going out he gave the two louis to the musicians, to which he added two others of his own; and he then dined with the chapter at the treasury.

The whole of my first day at Poitiers, with the exception of my walk before breakfast to the dolmen, was occupied in visiting all these various churches. The next morning I strolled out of the town into the valley of the Vouneuil. This little stream runs along the western side of the town, and, falling into the Clain immediately below it, close to the northern wall of the city, almost completes the isolation of the hill on which Poitiers

stands. Unlike that side of the hill which slopes gradually down to the bank of the Clain, the side which bounds the narrow valley of the Vouneueil is very nearly precipitous; and although the best general view of the city may be obtained from the rocks on the other side, which rise from the opposite bank of the larger river, perhaps a Prout-loving sketcher of picturesque bits of city walls, and quaint, lichen-grown fragments of medieval town architecture, might find more subjects for his pencil among the confused mass of weather-stained buildings which crown the rocky bank of the Vouneueil.

Farther up, the little valley becomes quite wild and picturesque, and I was seduced into rambling so far along it, that the best part of the day was gone before I got back to Poitiers; and, as I had left that city breakfastless, it behoved me to seek out some suburban hostelry which might supply my wants. There appeared no chance of finding this in the secluded little vale, whose windings had long since shut out from my view the walls and towers of the city; so, turning to the left, I quitted the river, and made my way across the fields into the road by which I had reached Poitiers from Niort. This seemed to hold

out a better prospect of finding that of which I was in search ; and, before I had followed it far, I fell in with a small roadside cabaret, which supplied me with coffee, new sweet bread, half wheat and half rye, fresh butter, and new laid “œufs à la coc.”

As I sat at a little table outside the door of the cabaret, enjoying these dainties, and the morning brightness, not yet too hot, of a glorious day, I observed a thick cloud of dust coming slowly along the road, which admonished me to move my table and its accompaniments within the door. The advancing cloud was quite sufficient to have very reasonably convinced Don Quixote of the approach of a large army ; but it turned out to be occasioned by an immense drove of mules. There must have been, I should think, some hundreds, conducted by four or five picturesque-looking figures on horseback, dressed in olive-coloured plush jackets, with red cotton sashes round their waists. Their complexions and physiognomy shewed plainly enough that they were from the south ; and the host of my little cabaret told me they were Gascons. A large trade, he said, was carried on for mules between Poitou and the departments of the south, and large numbers were

exported from different parts of the province every year.

The Poitevin mules have, in fact, been celebrated for many years ; and, as the breed seems destined for the most part for the use of a different part of the country, the production and exportation of them produces a considerable return of wealth to the province. Very considerable attention is paid to the purity and excellence of the breed, and a very high value is attached to the sires. The author of a "Promenade de Bagnères de Luchon à Paris" gives the following description of one of these "baudets," which he saw in the department of Les Deux Sèvres. "Figurez-vous," says he, "un énorme manchon soutenu, à quatre pieds de hauteur ; mais dont les poils noirs, partagés en grosses mèches, se recouvrant les uns sur les autres, descendaient jusqu' à terre. De ce gros manchon en sortait un plus petit, hérissé de deux pointes perçant à droit et à gauche, mais le tout tellement recouvert de long poils, comme le reste de la masse, que l'œil n'y découvrait aucun dessein. Tout cela était un baudet orné par la nature de la pelisse la plus précieuse qu'il pût porter ; car cette couleur et cette longueur de poils le faisait valoir 4000 francs.

Il y avait dans la même étable des baudets gris, a poils ras, plus hauts que lui, pleins de grace et de fierté, qui ne valaient pas 500 francs. Ce sont ces baudets à toge noire et flottante, qui donnent ces beaux mulets noirs auxquels les Espagnols mettent tant de prix.”

As soon as the dust arising from the transit of the long drove had subsided, I returned by the road to Poitiers. The cafés of this town appeared to me, much to its credit, to be less frequented, and consequently, of course, worse than those of any large town I had yet visited. But, as the heat of the day was tremendous, I passed an hour or two of the hottest part of it in one of them, and did not sally forth for another cruise through the town till the evening. I then found a sort of little travelling theatre erected in the Place Royal, with a huge placard, illuminated by two or three coloured lamps, inviting the Poitevins to see a rare collection of waxwork within. There was a long enumeration of the various celebrated characters to be seen inside, and, among the rest, pointed out to especial notice by extra large letters, “la belle *et pudique* Diane de Poitiers.” Diana was always rather a favourite with the people, with the exception however of the Huguenots, who had an espe-

cial spite against her, and is still more especially an interesting personage to the people of her own county of Poitou.

“C'est dommage,” says old Brantôme, with whom she was an especial favourite, “que la terre couvre un si beau corps. Elle était fort débonnaire, charitable, et aumônière; il faut que le peuple de France prie Dieu qu'il ne vienne jamais favorite de roi plus mauvaise que celle-là ni plus malfaisante.”

What, however, most amused me in the advertisement of the show, was an assurance that it was “fort decent”—so much so, that even the girls' schools and priests might visit it “sans le moindre scandale.”

It was, at all events, more decent than the mysteries which used to be exhibited in the same spot four centuries ago, and which the Poitevins were especially fond of. Nothing could exceed the gross improprieties of many of these pieces. They were many of them, however, written by ecclesiastics; and Michel Jean, bishop of Angers, composed a mystery, which contained the whole life of our Saviour, and was performed with great applause at Poitiers. Lazarus, when raised from the dead, related in this performance all that he had seen in hell at much length, together with a

thousand other absurdities. Mass was said in the pit before the commencement of the play ; and the painter who had painted the scene, which represented Paradise, cried out to the spectators, “ You see there, gentlemen, a more beautiful Paradise than you have ever seen—or ever will see.”

Upon another occasion, a mystery representing the creation of the world was to be performed at St. Maixent ; and every exertion had been made by the poet and his troop of players to get up the piece with extraordinary splendour and éclat. Every thing was at last arranged, with the exception of the costume to be worn by the player who was to represent the first person in the Trinity. To supply this deficiency, in an adequate and accurately correct manner, the author applied to the sacristan of the monastery for the loan of their richly-embroidered copes ; but was refused from fear of its being injured. The corps dramatique were exceedingly indignant at this refusal ; and, to revenge themselves for it on the father sacristan, contrived to ascertain that he would on a certain night be returning late to his convent from an expedition to Niort. So, having dressed themselves in the universally recognized costume of devils,

and waving large flaring torches in their hands, they waylaid the poor monk at a solitary part of the road; and, when he approached, jogging quietly along on his mule, burst out upon him, and commenced a demoniac shrieking and dancing around him. The quiet convent mule was as frightened as its master at the infernal sights and sounds, and commenced plunging and kicking in a manner that very quickly disembarassed it of its load. The unfortunate sacristan was thrown violently to the ground, while the scared animal galloped off as hard as it could lay leg to the ground to the convent gate.

The wicked devils, meanwhile, continued jumping around and over and upon their prostrate foe, kicking and pinching him after the most approved diabolical fashion, and screaming in infernal chorus:—“*Viola le miserable, qui ne voulut pas preter une chape au père éternel! Voila le malheureux, qui n’ à pas voulu preter une chape au grand Dieu!*”

This discipline was continued till the unfortunate father sacristan, what with fright and what with kicks, was half dead; and then the devils left him to find his way home to his convent as he best might.

A great variety of other anecdotes might be quoted to prove the exceeding profanity of the mysteries and those engaged in them, though they were for a long time deemed religious exhibitions, and were patronized and encouraged by the church.

The change in the amusements of the Poitevins from all this to the waxwork must, certainly, be admitted to be a favourable one.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Poitiers — Distinguishing Characteristics of Poitiers and Niort — Appearance of Poitiers at the Present Day — Former Commerce of Niort—Elements of the Population of Poitiers before the Revolution —Poitevin Tales, Traditions, and Legends — Legend of St. Martial — Philip de Comynes — “ Les Penitens d’Amour ” — The Extraordinary Regulations and Habits of their Society — Amiable Domestic Attentions—“ Martyrs d’Amour.”

IN the old days, when France was divided into provinces, and the three modern departments of Vienne, Les Deux Sèvres, and La Vendée, formed the ancient province and still more ancient county of Poitou, the two principal Poitevin cities, Poitiers and Niort, were ever marked by strikingly distinguishing characteristics. Poitiers, by far the most ancient town of the two, a venerable city of schools and schoolmen, convents, churches, and ecclesiastical corporations, was always the provincial centre of churchmen and lawyers, councils and parliaments, of study and literature; while Niort, its more youthful rival, has always been a town of commerce

and municipal franchises; and was, before the revolution, as well as at the present day, in especial contradistinction to old Poitiers, the centre of revolutionary ideas and liberalism.

Nor has the storm of 1793 been able to sweep away from the features of these two towns the characteristic marks of their different conditions. The old city, with its long, winding, quiet streets, its thin population, and fine large old houses looking into extensive gardens, and turning to the street long, lofty lines of dead walls, its still numerous churches and thickly-strewn relics of old ecclesiastical architecture lurking in quiet out-of-the-way corners, together with the dreamy sort of stillness which seems to hang over the town, is still evidently a city of magistrates, lawyers, priests, and "rentiers" living on their property; while Niort is as manifestly a busy, noisy, thickly-inhabited beehive, the creation of trade and commercial industry.

Before the revolution, even Niort contained but few ecclesiastics or nobles. The town was even then entirely industrial. One of its principal branches of industry was working in leather; and I find it recorded that, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, three

hundred artizans were employed there in making leather gloves and breeches for thirty regiments of cavalry; the cutting out of which gloves and breeches gave employment to eleven hundred women and children. In 1774, Niort had also a hundred and ten families of shoemakers engaged in the manufacture of shoes for exportation to America. A sort of coarse stuff also was manufactured in considerable quantities, and exported to Louisiana and Canada. This commerce was so important that, in the year 1775, stuffs to the amount of four hundred and seventy-two thousand livres were sold at the fair of Niort.

“L’activité industrielle de la ville de Niort,” writes a Poitevin historian, “y répandait l’aisance dans toutes les classes; les traditions des franchises municipales dont cette cité avait joui pendant plusieurs siècles, et les habitudes indépendantes des professions commerciales, y avaient imprimé à l’esprit public une tendance générale pour les idées de progrès et de liberté dont la noblesse elle-même portait l’empreinte, puisque la plupart de ses familles y devaient leurs fortune au négoce, et leurs titres aux fonctions électives de la mairie.”

Accordingly, we find that, while all the

rest of Poitou was more or less engaged in resistance to the republic, and suffered more or less severely for its principles, Niort took no part in the struggle, and contrived to remain tranquil and unscathed amid the surrounding tumult and devastation.

The population, habits, and ideas of Poitiers presented as strong a contrast as possible to all this. The trade of the town was confined almost, if not quite, entirely to the supply of the wants of its inhabitants. Of these one large class consisted of the professors of the university, in each of the four faculties of theology, law, medicine, and arts, and the body of their scholars. The ecclesiastics and spiritual persons formed a still larger class. The whole population of the city was then under 18,000 souls. Yet there were, besides the chapter of the cathedral, five collegiate bodies of clergy, twenty-four parish churches, ten convents of men and eleven of women, besides a great number of ecclesiastics attached in various capacities to the episcopal residence. There were a considerable number of families of the provincial "noblesse de la robe;" besides a great many of the landed proprietors of Poitou, who resided for several months in every year in the

city. Notwithstanding all this, there was always much poverty at Poitiers, which, in probability, arose not from the lack of charity, but from the abundance of alms-giving; for we are told that, “*les idées religieuses y exerçaient une grande influence.*” And it will ever be found that the indiscriminate alms-giving of Romanist devotion, together with the incentives which many of the doctrines and practices of that church hold out to idleness, generate poverty much more rapidly than the distribution of alms will ever be able to relieve its continually increasing wants and necessities.

A town thus constituted naturally formed a rich storehouse of ancient legends and traditions of all kinds; and Poitiers abounds in them. An enthusiastic lover of such lore might gather there a rich harvest of old world tales and curious stories, both clerical and lay, and appertaining to all epochs from that of the Romans, to the last days of old feudal France. Beginning with the legend of St. Martial, the apostle of Poitou, to whom, according to the Poitevin popular creed, our Saviour spoke from heaven in the year 70, as he was preaching in the open air, on the spot now occupied by the cathedral, in these

words: “ Martial, je suis ton Maître Jésus Christ, qui te notifie que cejourd’huy mon bien aimé apôtre Pierre a été crucifié pour mon nom à Rome, et veux qu’ en honneur de luy, et commémoration de son maître, tu fasses ici une église;—touching next on the traditional notices of the localities of Charles Martel’s victory over the Saracens; then selecting from the numerous anecdotes still extant of the many noble crusaders, whom Poitou contributed to the armaments of Europe, for the liberation of the holy land, those specimens which are richest in characteristic traits and romantic incident—not neglecting any stray notices, much less faithfully preserved, of the English wars in Poitou — then picking, from provincial records, many a curious fact tending to throw light on some of the dark passages of the interesting struggle and rivalry between Louis XI. and Charles of Burgundy, including sundry particulars of the career of our old friend Philip de Comynes, scarcely calculated, I am sorry to say, to increase our esteem for this Tacitus of the middle ages as a man, though tending to prove his intimate acquaintance with the subtle and intricately-woven web of the policy of those who imprinted a character on the

times of which he treats—not leaving untold the memorable tale of the seven-weeks' siege of Poitiers by D' Andelot, during the wars of religion, and ending with some of the many interesting details, which may yet be gathered from living witnesses, of the sad workings of the revolution in the provinces,—an industrious collector of such matters would easily amass materials which he would be puzzled to compress into any reasonable compass, and any part of which he would yet be unwilling to reject.

It is impossible to find space here even to enumerate all the subjects upon which very interesting matter might be found in the by-paths of Poitevin local history, but I cannot resist introducing to the reader, before we leave Poitiers, "les penitents d'amour," a society which formed itself in Poitou in the early part of the fourteenth century. Nothing can be more curiously characteristic of the epoch than the little history of this "confrerie," or club. A tolerably accurate idea may be formed from it of the morality of that age in France, while it illustrates amusingly and instructively enough the unhealthy condition of the minds which, with a morbid love of excitement, and in the absence of every

rational and legitimate object of ambition or useful occupation, could engender such monstrosities.

These "penitents of love," a title which seems to have been burlesqued from that of some of the numerous religious confreries, without the least shade of meaning, termed themselves also "Gallois" and "Galloises." They professed themselves to be the most devoted slaves of the blind god, and ever ready to become martyrs in his cause. The excess of their devotion, and the strength of the tender passion, was to be proved and exhibited by an utter disregard of the change of the seasons. Thus every dame and damsel, knight and squire, who was initiated into this new order, which rapidly increased its numbers, was bound to clothe themselves in the lightest possible garments during the extremity of winter, and to muffle themselves up in innumerable blankets in the greatest heats of summer. When all nature was drooping beneath the fierce sun of July and August, they were bound to sit by a large fire ; and, in December and January, any Gallois, or Galloise, who should have had fire in his or her house, or have neglected to garnish their chambers with green boughs, and throw

open all their windows, would have been held a traitor to his vows and to love, and have been ignominiously thrust from the society.

All this was done, says a Poitevin writer, “ sans doute pour faire allusion au pouvoir de l’amour, qui opère les plus étranges métamorphoses.”

Every member of the society chose, as his mistress, the wife of some other member of the club ; and whenever he visited the object of his affections, the husband was obliged, by the laws of the society, to leave the coast clear, and shew himself no more in the house till his guest had departed. “ Quand il entrerait, le mari le laissait le maître de tout, et ne paraissait point dans la maison que son hôte ne fut sorti.” This delicate attention was, of course, reciprocated : — “ il éprouvait à son tour la même complaisance de la part de son confrère, lorsqu’il allait chez lui.” To our island barbarism, such a degree of obliging hospitality may, perhaps, appear to be scarcely desirable as a general practice in society, and to merit some other epithet than that of “ *amiable* ;” but a modern author of more polite France, in speaking of the regulations of these “ *Peutens d’Amour*,” terms their society “ *une aimable folie*.”

This manner of life, and the amiable connections thus formed, continued, we are told, until the greater part of the society were either dead, in the natural course of things, or had perished with cold: "car," says the old author, who has handed down to us the history of this extraordinary society, "plusieurs transsaisaient de pur froid, et mouraient tout roides de lez leurs amies, et aussi leurs amies de lez eux, en parlant de leurs amourettes; et eux moquant et bourdant de ceux, qui étaient bien vêtus;" others were all but frozen, and were brought to life again by rubbing and warming them "Si ne doute point," concludes the last cited author, with exquisite naïveté, and evident admiration of the heroes and heroines, whose fate he records, "que ceux et celles qui sont morts en cet état, ne soient martyrs d'amour."

We will not stop now to scrutinize accurately the title of these martyrs to the honours of their canonization, more especially as we have already lingered full long among the quiet streets of the ancient capital of Poitou. To those who look on men and things with utilitarian eyes, and, caring but little for what has been, interest themselves only about what is, Poitiers will appear a dull and uninterest-

ing town; but, to the historical inquirer and antiquarian, to the lover of old memories, old stories, old places, and old things, few towns of France present, in their history and antiquities, a more inviting field of research and inquiry.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Journey to Saintes—Melle—Style of Country—Division of Poitou into two Basins—Their respective Characteristics—Corresponding differences in the Physical and Moral nature of the Population—Importance of Poitou in the General History of France—St. Jean d' Angely—Its Brandies—Whitewashing in the Aunis—Its Effects—Powder Manufactory—Fountain of Douet—Fountain of Vénérand—Quality of the Soil between St. Jean d' Angely and Saintes—Remains of the Roman Aqueduct of Saintes—Approach to Saintes.

I LEFT Poitiers early in the morning for Saintes, where I arrived, after a tedious and uninteresting journey of nearly fourteen hours; though the distance is only ninety miles. As far as Lusignan I had to retrace my steps, for it is just beyond that little town that the road from Poitiers branches off to Niort on the right hand, and to Melle, St. Jean d' Angely, and Saintes, on the left.

Melle is a cheerful-looking but uninteresting little town, which had, in the early ages of the monarchy, more importance than it possesses at the present day, as is testified by

the existence of certain coins struck there in the time of Charles the bald. The principal source of prosperity it has in these times is derived from its corn-market, which is considerable. There are no vines in the neighbourhood, and a large quantity of corn is grown in the surrounding communes. The little town is situated under the hills which, traversing the province of Poitou, from south-east to north-west, divide it into two very distinct and differently characterized portions. The north-eastern division is termed *La Gâtine*, and comprehends the *Bocage* of *La Vendée*, and portions of *Les deux Sèvres* and *Vienne*, which consist of a very similar description of country, very much wooded, that is, broken into innumerable hills and valleys, and chequered with much waste land, gorse-covered moors, rugged, rocky ground, and some forest. The streams which water this basin all pour their waters into the *Loire*.

The portion to the south west of the line of hills is strongly contrasted with all this. It is termed the plain, and consists of one wide, equable basin, whose waters run into the western ocean. It is entirely calcareous and extremely fertile, especially favourable to the growth of corn.

The "Marais," as has been before observed, in speaking of La Vendée, forms a third division, comprising the low country in the immediate neighbourhood of the seashore.

It is said, by the Poitevin physiologists, that the population of these three portions of territory are characterised by as strongly-marked differences as the country they inhabit. The peasant of La Gatine, say these writers, is of rather small stature, but well made. His head is large and round, with small, expressive eyes. His temperament is bilious and melancholic. His understanding is slow, but not without depth. His mind does not conceive readily, but is sound. He is kind and given to hospitality, but mistrustful and taciturn. The cultivator of the plain is marked by a higher stature, a more open countenance, and brighter complexion. The sentiment of religion is not so powerful in him as in his neighbour of the Bocage. The inhabitant of the Marais is still taller than those of the plain; he is, for the most part, larger also, and more heavily built. But he is not well knit — is wanting in activity, and very generally suffers in health, from the almost amphibious nature of his life. He is ordinarily slow, heavy, and apathetic.

On leaving Melle, then, I had again to cross the same wide basin which I had traversed between Niort and Saint Maixent, and the style of scenery was as nearly as possible the same. About half way between Melle and St. Jean d'Angely, the road passes from the department of Les deux Sèvres into that of La Charente Inferieure, and from the province of Poitou into the small district of Aunis.

I quitted Poitou with regret, and wished much that circumstances could have permitted me the time necessary to become more accurately acquainted with all its sites of historic interest. "Le Poitou a été," says M. Michelet, in his pleasingly-written history, "le champ de bataille du nord et du midi. C'est en Poitou que Clovis a défait les Goths; que Charles Martel a repoussé les Sarrasins; que l'armée Anglo-Gasconne du Prince Noir a pris le roi Jean Le Poitou a été le centre du Calvinisme au seizième siècle; il a recruté les armées de Coligny, et tenté une république protestante Poitiers a été avec Arles et Lyon la première école Chrétienne des Gaules Poitiers a été pour la France, sous quelques rapports, le berceau de la monarchie aussi bien que du Chris-

tianisme la dernière lueur de la poésie latine a brillé à Poitiers ; l'aurore de la littérature moderne y a paru au douzième siècle."

This is a tempting catalogue ; and as I turned round to take a last look of the smiling, wide-spread corn-fields of Poitou, I consoled myself for quitting a region of such high and varied interest, by a half promise that I would at some future time return—but alas ! how many draughts, never to be honoured, are daily drawn upon that precarious, but certainly diminishing property ! It is at that long anticipated period, when no other occupations shall demand their share of unelastic hours, and time shall be plenty with me, that I must revisit Poitou, and dedicate an entire summer to its towns and villages, its fields and streams, its histories and traditions.

The cheerful little town of St. Jean d'Angely is pleasantly situated on the river Boutonne, which, small and generally unimportant as it is, is by no means an inconsiderable element in the prosperity of the place ; for it is its petty stream which conveys into the mightier Charente the large quantity of brandy manufactured there. Thence the casks of St. Jean d'Angely find their way to the great highway of nations, and proceed to all parts of the

world as “*veritable eau de vie de Cognac.*” In fact, the produce of the distilleries of St. Jean d’Angely is, I believe, not at all inferior to that of the neighbouring town of Cognac; but so much sweetness is there in a name, that its value would be considerably diminished if it did not borrow that of its more celebrated neighbour.

It is the custom in this part of the Aunis to whitewash all the houses every year, which adds much to the bright and smiling aspect of the country, and reminds one of the green fields and laughing villages of picturesque Glamorganshire, where a similar practice prevails. It imparts, to a greater degree than could have been supposed to be produced by so simple a means, a pleasing air of cleanliness and cheerful amenity to this part of France, very unusual in the villages of most parts of the country. A French tourist in this province, indeed, goes so far as to attribute to the effect produced by this annual purification on the eyes, and through them on the minds of the inhabitants, the gaiety and joyous hilarity of disposition for which the people of the Aunis are celebrated; and their propensity to which is proved, he says, by “*Un Vauxhall superbe, et qu’on peut dire*

immense pour une ville de moins de dix mille habitans." His theory is by no means an unphilosophical one; as he very justly says, "L'ame est un miroir qui réfléchit l'impression des objets extérieurs telle qu'elle les reçoit."

The good folks of St. Jean d'Angely must, with all their gaiety, be of a most fiery disposition, for the only other product besides brandy, for which they are celebrated, is gunpowder; and as the traveller leaves the town, on his way to Saintes, he sees in the midst of the quiet, peaceful-seeming meadows which border the Boutonne, two unsightly and mysterious-looking edifices, in which the means of destruction are manufactured, in greater perfection, it is said, than any where else in France.

About half way between St. Jean d'Angely and Saintes is the village of St. Hilaire, beyond which, about a league and a half further to the right of the road, is the remarkable fountain of Douet, which is, in fact, a fragment of the Roman aqueduct that carried its waters to Saintes. It is hollowed in the rock with a circular and immensely high arch; and the waters, though their course is in a great measure obstructed by a mass of calcareous detritus, are beautifully limpid and transparent.

At the little village of Vénérand, which is just off the road to the left, there is a much more curious fountain. It springs in great abundance at the foot of a calcareous rock, from a well-head, which the people have never been able to fathom. The little river thus generated runs for a short distance, turns a mill, and then falls into a gulf, and re-enters the bowels of its mother earth. It is at the point of its fall into this abyss that its waters have been turned to profit during their short existence upon earth, by the creation of a mill. The sides of the gulf have been clothed with masonry, and the water-wheel is placed within it. The rock at whose foot this remarkable stream springs, is quarried to a considerable extent, and there are evident traces of far more extensive ancient excavations; so that in all probability the stream was by Nature destined to an entirely subterranean course, at least in this part of its journey, and has been laid open by the labours of man. Some persons have supposed that this is only another portion of the Saintes aqueduct; but this seems scarcely probable. The water is certainly of the same description and quality; but this it would naturally be, even were there no connection between the two, from the analogous nature of the country.

The soil is not altogether the same on this side of St. Jean d'Angely as on the other, but though the difference is small to the geologist, it is a very important one to the agriculturist. We are still in the same wide basin, which forms the south-western part of Poitou, and the earth is of the same calcareous description; but from being here far harder and more stony, with less tendency to decomposition, and less friable, it is not nearly so fertile. The corn-fields become rarer, and almost entirely disappear, and by far the greatest portion of the land is occupied with vineyards, producing a poor wine, destined almost entirely to the consumption of the distilleries of St. Jean d'Angely. As the traveller approaches the banks of the Charente, however, the quality of the land becomes softer and better. Throughout the whole of this basin, the state of the road is a very tolerable criterion of the value of the soil, which will almost invariably be found to be good in quality in pretty exact proportion to the badness of the road; for, where the chalky earth hardens into the consistency of stone, fertility ceases, and the road is excellent.

Not far beyond the fountain of Vénérand the road passes near the principal remains of

the aqueduct of Saintes, consisting of a few of the pillars and arches on which it crossed the valley. Beyond this it entered the hill which separates this valley from Saintes, and its course may be traced by a succession of wells, intended to freshen it by a free circulation of the atmosphere.

Soon after this the traveller crosses the broad stream of the Charente, and enters the ancient capital of Saintonge.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Saintes — Banks of the Charente — Roman Triumphal Arch — Its Present Condition — Amphitheatre — Its Destination — The Capitol — Fragments of Ancient Architecture — Derivation of the Name of the Town and Province — The Ancient Cathedral — Its Tower — Voyage to Rochefort — Steamer on the Charente — Style of Scenery — *Clever Old Lady* — Taillebourg — St. Louis; his Victory over the English — Dolmen, near Taillebourg — Tradition respecting it — Druidical Axe found beneath it — St. Savinien — Tonnay Charente — Its Situation — and Commerce — Exportation of Brandy — Arrival at Rochefort.

THE town of Saintes, ancient beyond the earliest records of even semi-fabulous history, is now interesting only from its antiquity, and from the traces of its splendour and importance under the Romans. It is a pretty smiling town, however, as seen on a bright day from the banks of the Charente, and a stroll of a mile or two up the green bank of the river will well repay the visitor for his trouble.

The remains of Roman art and magnificence meet the stranger's eye immediately on

his entry into the town, if he arrives, as I did, from the north, or from the east; for the celebrated arch of triumph stands in the middle of the bridge by which he reaches the town, built on the western bank of the Charente. Its appearance at the present day is that of a heavy, ragged, rectangular mass of masonry, containing two low-browed, heavy, circular archways, and must be confessed to be entirely devoid of either grace or grandeur. But a little examination of the localities makes it evident, even to the unpractised observer, that the edifice is not now seen as it was built. Its position, when "Caius Julius Rufus, priest of Rome, and of Augustus," raised it as a monument to the memory of Germanicus, of Tiberius, his uncle, and Drusus, his father, was evidently not in the middle of the stream, but on its bank; and it is only by the gradual encroachment of the river that it now finds itself dividing the long bridge over the Charente into two nearly equal portions.

Its entire height now is thirty-eight feet; but, according to the measurement of M. Guérinot, a civil engineer employed some years ago on the repairs of the bridge, its original altitude, before a portion of it was built into one of the piers, must have been forty-nine feet; and

the general effect produced by it then must of course have been entirely different from that which results from its present mutilated proportions. But the ancient priest's arch has gained at least as much as it has lost by this conversion of its lower portion into one of the piers of the bridge, and the consequent necessity of keeping at least that part of it in repair; for the architect, Blondel, in 1665, availed himself of the opportunity which the repairs of the bridge afforded him, to consolidate its foundations; and Guérinot profited by a similar occasion of assisting to keep the venerable and decrepit structure upon its legs. Without these reparations, it is probable that the entire fabric would long since have entirely fallen to ruin.

Its material is not marble, as the accounts of several French topographers declare, but a calcareous stone of much less durable nature, containing portions of fossilized matter. All the angles are more or less worn off; the joinings of the stones have in all parts of the edifice lost their cement, and yawn in a manner ominously indicative of decay; all the sharp and salient portions of the ornamental work have entirely perished, and the entire appearance of the building is so decay-stricken

and infirm, that it seems marvellous that the old stones, which seem to cling together merely by long habit, and the ancient companionship of so many centuries, can still sustain themselves above the crazy arches.

In the faubourg of Saint Eutrope are the less considerable, in point of condition, though more extensive, ruins of an amphitheatre. Its elliptical figure is about seventy feet in length, by nearly sixty wide; and it is worth observing that these dimensions are as nearly as possible those of the much more magnificent and better preserved amphitheatre of Nismes. All that remains of this testimony to the former magnificence of the capital of the Santones are mere ruins; but they are sufficient to indicate the form and extent of the building. Some antiquaries have thought that it was destined for the representation of Naumachic entertainments, and that the aqueduct which arrived at Saintes on this side, and of which traces are still visible in the immediate vicinity, was intended to supply the waters necessary for this purpose. There are, however, remains of what appear to have been cages for wild beasts; and it seems not at all improbable that the arena was at pleasure either flooded for the Naumachia, or left dry for the combat of animals.

These are not the only proofs of the wealth, splendour, and importance of the city which once occupied in part the site of the modern town of Saintes. The Roman Mediolanum Santonum, which Ammianus Marcellinus, who wrote in the fourth century, speaks of as one of the most flourishing cities of Aquitaine, appears to have occupied the summit of the hill, at whose foot the present town is built; and the site, scarcely now distinguishable, where once stood the Capitol on the height, occupied at a subsequent period by the convent of Carmelites, still indicates not only the position but the importance of the ancient city. Various fragments of architecture, too—such as broken columns of superb proportions, sculptures, and friezes, many well designed and executed, have been found from time to time scattered throughout the modern town, which testify to the magnificence of the buildings to which they belonged. The best preserved and most remarkable of these have been collected into the garden of the Sous-prefecture, where it is to be hoped they will be secure from farther mutilation and degradation. Ancient baths, too, have been discovered in a garden near the seminary.

Notwithstanding that the name of the town

Saintes, and that of its ci-devant province Saintonge, are derived evidently enough from that of the ancient tribe who inhabited the district—the Santones — the names were always written during several centuries *Xaintes*, and *Xaintonge*. And some fanciful etymologists insisted upon it that the city was founded by a colony of Trojans, who called it *Xaintes*, after the name of their beloved stream the *Xanthus*, which bathed the walls of their native city.

Saintes was formerly a bishop's see. Its cathedral, built by Charlemagne, in fulfilment of a vow made by his father Pepin when he conquered Aquitaine, was burned in 997, restored by Peter of Confolens, Bishop of Saintes, in 1117, and devastated a second time by the Protestants in 1568. The present church, which was not completed till 1763, has nothing remarkable about it except its handsome portal, and its huge low tower, which seems an immense bunch of pinnacles, from the number of them used to adorn it, and looks not unlike one of those large masses of crystallizations whose pyramidical points project in every direction from the block formed by their united bases.

I left Saintes at half-past six in the morn-

ing of the next day but one after my arrival there for Rochefort. A little steamer has been established on the Charente, which performs the voyage from Saintes to Rochefort and back daily ; and a very pleasant trip it is. It was a beautifully bright morning, and the beams of the sun, already high in the cloudless sky, glanced gaily on the placid bosom of the gentle Charente, and tinted every thing around with the gladsome hues of golden light, and the seeming of universal happiness. The quiet river winds its capriciously sinuous course among extensive flat meadows, exquisitely green, and thickly studded with large herds of grazing cattle. And the whole scene, through which we were moving as the boat rounded one graceful turf-clothed curve after another, presented, though somewhat monotonous, as sweetly tranquil and dreamily soothing a pastoral landscape as poet's fancy could conceive, or painter's canvas represent.

Our vessel and her crew were quiet, too ;—far more so than would have seemed agreeable to the proprietors of the little steamer ; for, if the passengers she that day conveyed be a fair sample of her usual freight, the speculation can hardly, I should think, have been a

good one. The establishment of a steamer on the Charente between Saintes and Rochefort is, I believe, of recent date; and it may be likely to succeed better as the habits and ideas of the people become gradually accustomed to the novel mode of conveyance. I was exceedingly amused by the precautions one old lady, who had evidently never been on board a steamboat before in her life, took to ensure her safety and that of her lap-dog, whom she vigilantly compelled to share her place of security. This was immediately over the boiler. I could not conceive what induced the old soul to continue standing so long in one spot, and insisting on her dog also standing close to her. The captain offered her a seat in vain. She preferred retaining the position she had taken up; and at length my curiosity was so much excited, that I determined to make an attempt to fathom the mystery.

So I addressed her with some remark on the speed of the boat, spoke of the distance to Rochefort, inquired whether she was going thither, and, on finding that she was, suggested that she would be very tired if she continued standing all the while, and offered to put up for her one of the hanging benches at the sides of the vessel.

No! she was much obliged; she preferred standing. “Fidele, ne bougez pas donc; couchez! restez là!”

I ventured to observe that, perhaps, if she preferred standing, she might find it more agreeable to stand in the after-part of the vessel, as the vibration of the engine was much more felt where she was, and must be disagreeable to her.

Oh, not at all! au contraire, she rather liked it, as the motion made it seem to her as if she was getting on with her journey, like the jogging of a coach; whereas, if she felt nothing, she could hardly believe that she was moving, and not the banks.

I thought this was very unfairly humouring the imagination at the expense of all the other constituent parts of the soul and body; but there is no accounting for tastes. I determined, however, to make one more attempt, and with this view remarked, after a pause of a few minutes, that a great many steamboats had blown up lately, and that I rather doubted the safety of this one. Upon this subject she was perfectly at home—knew all the accidents that had been in the papers for years back; and seemed to consider it rather more in the ordinary course of things, that a boat should

blow up once in the course of a trip than otherwise.

I began to be amazed now in earnest, and to suspect that this tremendously fire-proof old lady must be not altogether sound in her intellectuals. I just observed to her, however, that if—or rather when—the boiler did burst, we should, if we continued standing where we then were, infallibly be the first and most certain sufferers; to which she replied with two or three gentle nods of her head, and an approximation to a wink—

"Soyez tranquille! Je connais mon affaire! N'ayez pas peur! Ce n'était pas hier que je suis venue au monde! Regardez donc. Ne voyez vous pas que je suis ici en sûreté. Couchez donc, Fidèle! Oui, oui! Je connais mon affaire! personne mieux!" added the old lady, with much self-complacency, as she pointed out to me a pipe connected with the safety-valve, on which was inscribed, in white capital letters, "TUBE DE SURETÉ."

By the time I had thus succeeded in discovering the old lady's motive for choosing this position, from which she never budged till the end of the voyage, and was master of the secret of her imperturbable equanimity, the boat was advancing through the midst of the

green meadow, which is spread far and wide beneath the isolated rock on which are the picturesque ruins of the ancient castle of Taillebourg, on the right bank of the river. It is spoken of in the twelfth century under the name of "Talleburgus;" and it must have been a place of considerable importance, as commanding the course of the river. The traces of an ancient bridge are discernible, too, immediately opposite to the village.

This little place is celebrated in French history for the victory which St. Louis gained there over the English in 1242. There is in the neighbourhood, in the commune of Geay, a Druidical altar, called the Dolmen de Civrac; and the tradition of the country declares that, after the battle, St. Louis laid himself down to rest from the fatigue of the fight under this stone, and there fell asleep.

Some excavations, made some time ago, beneath this dolmen, discovered one of those flint axes which the Druids used in the immolation of their human sacrifices.

A little below Taillebourg, the small town of St. Savinien, situated at a little distance from the right bank of the river, is visible far across the broad, flat meadows, long before the winding of the stream brings the boat

opposite to it. And when this has at length been passed, and some distance lower down the stream has been increased by the junction of the Boutonne, the traveller soon comes in sight of the bustling, commercial, little town of Tonnay Charente.

This little town has an extremely gay and agreeable appearance, from being shut in and sheltered by the rich green banks of the river, which, unlike the part of its course that we had just traversed, here rise to a considerable height. The vessels, too, which throng the quay and the river in front of it, and their active, busy crews, render the scene animated and lively. The town of Tonnay Charente had more importance before Louis XIV. constructed Rochefort; but its trade is still considerable. It consists almost entirely of brandy, of which a vast quantity, and of the best quality, is shipped hence to every part of the world; but by far the largest quantity and the most prime samples to little England — that monopolizing little island, for whose use and gratification is reserved all that is richest and rarest of earth's produce, and all that the best skilled industry of every nation can create most choice in the various arts in which each excells.

Several English ships were taking in their cargoes as I passed by Tonnay Charente; and long lines of nice-looking, trim new casks, smart with innumerable hoops, were occupying the whole length of the quay. All the Cognac brandy comes down the river to this little port; and it would require but the wreck of one or two of those richly-freighted barges which descend the stream with every tide, together with that of a homeward-bound West Indiaman, opportunely driven into the river for shelter, to make the Charente run with most admirable punch, and furnish a draught which that exemplarily sober man, Mynheer Van Dunk, would admit to be worthy of a Hollander, though not quite so deep as the Zuyder Zee.

The commerce of this port consists now nearly, if not entirely, of the exportation of brandy; and the wines of the surrounding district are deemed scarcely worth drinking, even in France, much less are they good enough for exportation. It seems, however, that this was not the case formerly; for, in a letter from Thomas Browne to his father, Dr. Browne of Norwich, the author of the *Vulgar Errors*, the writer says, ‘ Five leagues from Xainctes, up the river Charente, stands

the town of Coniac, or Cognac from whence cometh the *Cognac wine*, whereof we drink in England in summer."

Leaving this spirituous little town behind us, we soon neared Rochefort, which we reached about ten o'clock, having performed the last part of our voyage between deep, black, mud banks, which the retiring tide had left bare and hideous.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Rochefort—Population of the Town — Different Sites chosen for an Arsenal before Rochefort was fixed on — Rochefort before the Establishment of the Dockyard — Hospital — Admission to the Arsenal — Steamboats on the Stocks — The Bagne — Statistical Account of the Criminals confined there from 1803 to 1812—The Model Room—Anecdote of a Coiner—Journey to La Rochelle—Nature of the Country—Ancient City of Chatelaillon—Approach to La Rochelle — View of the City — Cafés in the Provinces—Frequenters of them—Their Amusements — Comic Singer—Remains of Richelieu's Mole — The famous Siege of La Rochelle — Anecdote — Present Commerce of the Town — The Harbour — Fishermen—Steamer to the Ile de Ré — View from the Tower of St. Sauveur—Catholics and Protestants—Extraordinary Employment of a Church Tower — Streets of La Rochelle — “ La Rue des Gentilhommes ” — Savary de Mauleon—Anecdotes of his Love Passages.

ROCHEFORT was founded for a royal arsenal, and the town contains nothing else of any interest, possesses no other element of prosperity, and consists of little else but the various classes of persons employed in or connected with the dockyard, and the tradesmen and labourers, who live by the supply of their wants.

Till the middle of the seventeenth century,

Brest was the only royal port and arsenal which France possessed on the western ocean. Louis XIV. determined to construct another. The locality first fixed on was the mouth of the little river Seudre ; but a more careful examination shewed that that river did not possess sufficient depth for the purpose. Moreover, the ordinary violence of the wind in the "Pertuis de Maumusson," and the expence that must have attended the foundation of an establishment, which must have been erected entirely on piles, were strong reasons against the choice of this river.

Colbert next cast his eye on Brouage, a little port amid the marshes opposite to the isle of Oleron. It was found, however, that this port, which had in former times been sufficiently deep, had become filled with mud. The establishment, too, would have interfered with a considerable manufacture of salt carried on there by the inhabitants. Another spot, therefore, was to be sought.

Soubise on the Charente, a little below Rochefort, was next proposed, and the place seemed to unite in itself all the various conditions requisite for the purpose. Three vessels of war had already been built there in the year 1659, and the minister thought that

he had at last found a locality for his new port in every way desirable. But Colbert at Soubise reckoned without his host, for the prince of Rohan-Soubise refused to sell his principality; and a place for the arsenal was therefore still to seek.

It was determined, however, that it should be somewhere on the river Charente; for the roadstead at its mouth, formed by the islands of Ré, Oleron, and Aix, is the only one on the whole of this part of the coast. It has fifteen fathoms of depth at low water, and is able to contain fifteen ships of the line, ten frigates, and a proportionable number of smaller craft.

Tonnay Charente was next fixed on. It was thought that at length all difficulties were over. The place was in most respects exactly what was wanted, and the first preparations were immediately made. Engineers were sent down; the plan of the port was traced out; the situation of the various magazines and warehouses was determined on; and, on the 12th of July, 1664, the king's ships entered the river. For two years the works were carried on with activity, at the end of which time the government thought of treating with the proprietor of the land re-

quired, for the purchase of it; and it was then found that the Duc de Mortemar, to whom Tonny Charente belonged, refused to part with it. Thus the grande monarque was once more foiled in his wishes by the opposition of his subjects; "un obstacle," says an historian of Rochefort, "que sa puissance ne voulut pas surmonter."

The present site was then selected; and, as there was nobody to oppose him here but Dame Nature, Rochefort was definitely fixed on for the new establishment. It was a miserable village of fishermen's huts, groveling among the unhealthy marshes around an ancient fortress, mentioned in documents of a date as early as the eleventh century. No spot could be less adapted by Nature for the foundation of a town. Wide, insalubrious marshes spread far around in every direction; and it was evident that a town so situated must ever be extremely unhealthy. Neither Louis, however, or his minister, had the smallest intention of ever residing there, so this did not much matter. The town was built; and by far the largest and most important building in it at the present day is an enormous hospital.

On landing from the steamboat, I hastened

down to the principal gate of the arsenal, and asked permission to see it. I was told that I must first apply at the Hôtel de Ville, which caused me a broiling walk back into the "grande place," a huge square in the centre of the town. At the Hôtel de Ville they asked for my passport, then gave me a certificate that they had seen it, for which they charged me a few sous, and told me that, by presenting that to the naval officer in command at the gate of the arsenal, I should be admitted—all which duly came to pass.

An old veteran, one of the "gardiens" of the yard, was directed to walk round with me, and shew me every thing. There were of course all the usual wonders appropriate to such establishments, immensely long galleries for twisting cables, inconceivably heavy anchors stacked in innumerable heaps of ten or twelve each, whole yards full of pyramidal piles of cannon-balls of all sizes, and all the various workshops of block-cutters, forgers, arm manufacturers, &c. There were also two enormously large steam-ships on the stocks, one of which the hull was nearly finished, and one of which the keel only was just laid down. I believe that these vessels were to be of the force of from 450 to 500 horses.

There is at Rochefort, as at all the other royal arsenals of France, a "bagne," or prison, so called from the ancient mode of punishment, which consisted in chaining the prisoners to the oars of galleys, whence we have the term galley-slaves. I chanced to see the miserable troop returning from their labours in the dockyard to the bagne. Two large pieces of cannon are placed opposite to the entrance, which are always charged with grape-shot. And always when the forçats pass from the prison to their work, or return to the bagne, two artillerymen, with lighted matches, place themselves by the side of these pieces of ordnance. I went through the bagne, which contained at that time about 1500 prisoners, and I thought that they appeared less comfortable than at Brest.

The following table, shewing the number of forçats in the Bagne of Rochefort during ten years, from 1803 to 1812, together with the crimes for which they were condemned, I thought worth extracting from a statistical account of the Bagne of Rochefort, principally for the sake of the curious increase and diminution of certain crimes, indicative of the moral condition of the country.

NATURE DES CRIMES.	ANNEES.									
	1803	1804	1805	1806	1807	1808	1809	1810	1811	1812
Attentat à la vie d'autrui	114	198	187	161	180	191	212	220	230	270
Vol simple et domestique	322	399	447	433	440	438	426	444	454	630
Vol de chevaux	39	21	17	17	14	12	7	6	7	9
Vol de grand chemin	85	72	82	73	73	74	68	67	77	112
Vol avec effraction ou attroupe- ment	1192	782	757	659	648	614	598	599	593	570
Recel	69	34	38	31	38	39	31	33	34	26
Faux	142	115	145	139	161	168	163	161	153	142
Fausse-monnaie	101	80	73	69	58	58	53	50	56	43
Viol	25	27	24	25	37	39	39	42	42	46
Bigamie	11	19	14	15	17	15	14	15	14	12
Desertion ou vente d'effets d'équipe- ment	32	26	35	32	22	27	27	29	25	39
Résistance à la force armée	45	44	53	67	70	72	77	73	74	62
Banqueroute frauduleuse	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	1	3
Contrebande . . . . .	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	6	6	7
Miquelets . . . . .	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	30	27
	2170	1821	1876	1725	1762	1751	1719	1747	1796	1998

The model-room is the most interesting part of the exhibition, and would doubtless be highly so to a naval or scientific man. A large and very curiously-constructed clock was pointed out to me, which was invented and executed entirely by a prisoner in the Bagne, who was furnished with all the necessary materials and tools for the purpose, by the permission of the governor of the prison. It was not till he had finished it that it was discovered that, under the pretence of working at his clock, and by means of the metals and tools furnished him for the purpose, he had been all the time engaged in manufacturing false money to a very large extent. He was guillotined in front of the prison, as is uniformly the practice in the case of galley-slaves capitally condemned in the Bagne.

I left Rochefort for La Rochelle the same evening, and arrived there about eight o'clock. The distance is about twenty miles. Nothing can be conceived more monotonous or less interesting than the tract of low marshy country which extends along the coast between these two towns. The wide salt meadows make excellent grazing grounds, and in some parts a considerable quantity of land under cultivation is seen among them. The richness

and fertility, indeed, of the land is vouched for by the very whimsical reason a topographical writer assigns for certain difficulties which opposed themselves to the establishment of a post at Rochefort. The postmaster could not, it is said, make any profit of his manure, but was, on the contrary, obliged to pay for having it carried away, as the land in the environs is so rich that it is rendered too rank by the application of it.

About half way between the two towns, near the village called "Le Passage," where the relay of the post is established, existed formerly the city of Chatelaillon, which has been entirely swallowed up by the encroachments of the sea. A little village on the coast still perpetuates the name, but does not occupy any part of the site of the ancient city, which was considerably to the south of the present village of Chatelaillon. It was in the time of Charlemagne the principal city in this part of the country, and was walled and fortified by him to secure it from the incursions of the Normans. Its destruction appears to have been the first cause of the foundation of the city of La Rochelle, which, during the existence of the older town, was merely an insignificant hamlet.

The immediate approach to La Rochelle is pretty enough, and the little city shows itself to most advantage in this direction. All its most remarkable buildings present themselves at once to the eye, and their various spires and towers, forming themselves into a long semicircular line, give a great appearance of extent to the place, and prepare a stranger to expect a more magnificent and larger town than La Rochelle really is. To the extreme right is the tower of St. Sauveur's church, the loftiest edifice in the city. Next comes the old tower of the cathedral, which is detached from the present mesquin modern church, and at some little distance from it. To the left of this, range themselves the two picturesque old towers which stand on either side of the entrance to the harbour. They are fragments of the old town walls, and are, with the exception of one or two gates, nearly all that remains of them. Beyond these, to the extreme left, is the quaint old tower of the edifice, now used as a military prison, surmounted with its queer-looking little grey steeple.

It turned out a wet evening, and I had, therefore, nothing better to do than to spend the hours which must intervene before I felt

inclined to go to bed in a café. Indeed, I scarcely ever pass four and twenty hours in a town without devoting one of them in the evening to a visit to the principal café in the place; and it is very rarely that I fail to find ample materials for amusement, while I sip my coffee and smoke my cigar, in the occupations and conversation of those around me.

A large portion of the frequenters of a French café in almost every town consists of the officers of the troops quartered there, from the colonel, with his bullion epaulettes, down to the corporal, distinguished in his dress from the private only by a yellow stripe on the arm of the loose grey drugget garment, half coat, half cloak, which constitutes the exceedingly shabby and unbecoming costume of the French infantry. The officers seem to live almost entirely in the cafés; and there are very few hours in the day, except those dedicated to sleep, the parade, and dinner at one of the tables d'hôte in the town, at which the principal cafés of the place may not be found crowded with them. Their time is spent principally in playing cards on little square bits of carpet laid on the marble-topped tables—by the side of which may generally be seen a bottle of beer and two

tumblers—or dominoes, or billiards; a table for this game being a *sine qua non* portion of the furniture of these resorts. The officer and non-commissioned officer may frequently be seen playing together for the price of the table, or for their bottle of beer, or cup of coffee.

The wetness of the evening, and the largeness of the garrison quartered at La Rochelle, caused the café to be very numerously attended; and cards, dominoes, newspapers, billiards, and chat, were all put in requisition to pass the time. It is very common for musicians and singers to come in the course of the evening to the different cafés and earn a few sous by endeavouring to amuse the company. Upon the present occasion, a sedate, fat old man in black, with a fiddle, entered the room, and, making a grave bow to the assembly, seated himself at the farther end of the apartment and proceeded to sing a variety of comic songs to the accompaniment of his fiddle. They were exceedingly successful, being received with shouts of laughter. One especially drew down immense applause. The moral of it was that one man is no better than another, all men being equally rogues, and the apparently vir-

tuous only successful hypocrites; and the burthen of each verse ran—

Oui! le cochon fait le jambon;
Et l'occasion fait le larron.

The next morning was, contrary to my expectations, fine, and I left my inn early to walk out to the beach while it was low water, in order to see the remains of the celebrated mole by means of which Richelieu triumphed at last over the courageous obstinacy of the Huguenots, after one of the most heroically sustained sieges on record. The famine which the besieged endured with unflinching resolution and constancy was perhaps the most tremendous of all the similar afflictions which the history of sieges has recorded. The inhabitants were reduced by it from twenty-seven to five thousand! and they demanded to capitulate only when the construction of this immense work by the architect, Metezeau, put an end to all possibility of relief from England, on which all their hopes of ultimate success had rested.

It was at the commencement of this dreadful siege, and in a chamber still shown in the Hôtel de Ville, that the burgher hero, Guiton, the indomitable mayor of La Rochelle, spoke these memorable words to his fellow-citizens of the

town council, holding a poniard in his hand :
“ I accept your election ! I am willing to be mayor, since such is your choice ; but it shall be on the condition that it shall be permitted me to plunge on the instant this poniard in the breast of the first among us who shall speak of surrendering the town. I consent that any one of you shall use it against me, should I ever be seduced into proposing such a measure ; and I demand that the dagger I now hold in my hand remain always on the table of our chamber of meeting, expressly to remind us of our determination, and of the condition upon which I take the office of mayor.”

The result of the siege, and its consequences on the future fortunes of the town, and of the entire Huguenot party, are sufficiently well known. La Rochelle never recovered its former prosperity, and, even at the present day, its population, instead of the twenty-seven thousand which it possessed at the commencement of the siege, is only about fourteen thousand. The city, however, is still a commercial place, and exports considerable quantities of brandy, which is the leading produce of the department of which it is the capital. The little port is a very

picturesque one. It consists of a small basin entirely surrounded by the buildings of the town, with the exception of the narrow entrance between the two old towers before mentioned. The quay which runs round it is planted with trees, and the quaint old towers of one of the gates of the town, called the "grosse Horloge," is seen to advantage among them. Altogether, the scene is a pleasing one, and would form a subject worthy of the pencil of a Vernet.

I remained for some time during the middle of the day lazily lounging on the quay, and watching the various occupations of the quiet little harbour, and admiring the exemplary patience of several fishermen, who continued letting down and drawing up their square nets, stretched at the four corners, and fixed to the end of a long pole, with uniform want of success. I saw the little steamer which plies between La Rochelle and the Isle de Ré start on its daily voyage, and then ascended the tower of St. Sauveur's church, and watched its progress during the greater part of its short passage.

The seaward view from the top of this tower is not an uninteresting one, varied as it is by the vessels in the roadstead, and by

the islands, that of Ré immediately opposite La Rochelle, and stretching away to the westward, and to the south the long, low line of Oleron less distinctly visible, but marked at its northern extremity by the lighthouse, and by the steeple of Oleron at its southern point. The landward view has no interest. The country around the town is a uniform dead level, and for the most part marshy; but though resembling Rochefort in these respects, La Rochelle is said to be, unlike that town, perfectly healthy.

The sacristan, who accompanied me to the top of the tower, told me that the Protestants were still very numerous in La Rochelle. All the richest citizens and merchants, he said, were of that persuasion; but the poorer people, and the whole of the lowest class, were Catholics. There was no sort of jealousy or ill-will between the members of these different communions, and the Catholic bishop and the Protestant préfet visited and dined with each other.

I was absolutely shocked to find from the same authority, that the tower on which we were standing, a part and parcel of the consecrated building dedicated to God by a more religious and less worldly generation, is at

the present day let to a shot manufacturer for the purposes of his calling! Even if the tower were, like that of the cathedral in this town, separated and distant from the church, the thing would be revolting, though less disgracefully improper. But such is not the case; and the services of the church must be continually interrupted by the noise and bustle of the manufactory established within its walls! What is there that a citizen of La Jeune France will not do for money! I could not avoid, as I descended this so shamefully desecrated tower, recalling old Johnson's version of Juvenal's "Græculus esuriens."

The sacristan, who appeared to be totally unaware that he was telling me any thing strange or remarkable, and who, I suppose, would think it the most natural thing in the world to let the altar to a blacksmith to fix his anvil on, if an offer could be got for it, said, on my expressing some surprise at such an arrangement, that the tower of the archiepiscopal church of Bourdeaux was let for the same purpose; and this I afterwards ascertained to be the fact!

I employed the remainder of the day in strolling through the streets of the town, and picturing to my fancy the various scenes of

physical agony and mental despair, of stern heroic resolution unbending before the face of death approaching slowly and surely, and clothed with all the hideous terrors of gaunt famine, which the chambers of these overhanging, ancient-looking houses had witnessed at the period of the too celebrated siege. Most of the streets have an appearance of antiquity, and are in some degree picturesque from being built “en columbage,” as the French architects call it — that is to say, the upper stories of the houses project so far, as to be supported on arcades, and thus form a sort of gallery or cloister for the accommodation of foot-passengers, agreeable enough in wet or very hot weather, as nearly the whole town may be traversed under shelter and shade.

I observed inscribed on the corner of one of the streets the name “La Rue des Gentilhommes,” of which obnoxious word the first two syllables had been erased at the revolution, leaving the street called “Des hommes.” A more modern inscription, however, has restored to it its ancient appellation.

La Rochelle has been upon many other occasions, besides that of the wars of religion, marked by events of historical importance.

During the wars in Poitou between France and England, it was more than once taken and retaken by either party, and many interesting anecdotes of those times are to be found among its annals. In the early part of the thirteenth century, it was held for the English by Savary de Mauléon, who, as the tradition goes, delivered it up to King Louis VIII., because the English government had sent him, instead of money, boxes filled with bran and stones. But a recent historian of the town proves satisfactorily, as it seems, that this was not the case, and that it was to the prowess of the French king that Savary yielded.

This Savary de Mauléon was one of the most celebrated of the preux chevaliers of that day. The author of the "Histoire des Troubadours" says, that he was a "brave et galant chevalier, aimant les assemblées, les tournois, les divertissements, et les vers;" and recounts from a manuscript of Hugues de Saint Cyr the following anecdote of him, which is most curiously characteristic of the state of manners and morality at that period.

Savary, who was frequently designated as "le chef de toutes courtoisies," had long loved—"et servi," says Hugh de St. Cyr, in

the old troubadour phrase — a noble lady of Gascony, called Guillemette de Bonnavias, the wife of Pierre de Gavarel, lord of Langon and Saint Macaire. But, despite the bravest deeds that were ever accomplished for a lady's love, despite his oaths, fond messages, presents and jewels, he could make no impression upon her. "Je puis vous dire en verité," says the gossiping old chronicler, "il fut mal récompensé de celle-ci." Many a time she let him come from Poitou into Gascony, by land and by sea; and when he was arrived, she knew well how to put him off with false reasons, "et de se dispenser de lui accorder le plaisir d'amour."

But Savary, blinded by his passion, did not perceive that the lady Guillemette was but fooling him, till his friends opened his eyes to the fact, "et lui firent faire connaissance avec une autre dame de Gascogne." This second love was the Countess of Montagnac, *wife* again of Girault de Mauléon. It seems to have been almost as indispensable to the existence of a "grande passion" then, as now, in France, that the object of it should be another man's wife. Madame de Montagnac is described as having been young, lovely, and agreeable. She was desirous, says Hugh

de St. Cyr, of acquiring esteem, and, *therefore*, wished to see Savary, “pour tout le bien qu’ elle en avait entendu dire.” The youthful wife was anxious to enjoy the reputation of having so celebrated a lover.

A meeting was arranged ; and when Savary saw her, he was so charmed by her “que c’était merveille, en sorte qu’il la prioit d’amour. La Dame touchée de son mérite, le retint pour son chevalier, et lui assigna jour pour recevoir d’elle tout ce qu’il désirait. Il s’en alla fort joyeux.”

In the mean time, the lady Guillemette de Bonnavias heard of her old lover’s desertion, and of his more successful suit elsewhere. This was an insult to her not to be tolerated ; and as the best means of preventing the purposed interview, she immediately determined on sending him a rendezvous for the same day ; “et sachez que moi, Hugues de St. Cyr, qui écris ceci, fus le messenger qui portait ses lettres.”

On the receipt of this, the good knight was sadly puzzled what he should do—not as regarded his own inclinations at all. He appears either to have been perfectly indifferent upon the subject, or to have considered his own feelings quite a secondary consideration ; for

his whole difficulty consisted in his doubts as to the etiquette of the matter, and his anxiety to do exactly that which the rules of love, made and provided, in similar cases enjoined.

The best opinion on all such knotty cases was the troubadour, and Savary consulted the provost of Limoges, "homme vaillant, bon trouveur." He read to him, we are told, an account of the whole matter, and then "pria le prévôt de lui faire une question en vers, et de proposer dans une tenson, auquel des deux rendezvous il devait donner la préférence."

The author of the history of the troubadours remarks, that the provost of Limoges is known to us only by the piece which he composed on this occasion.

The troubadour, who was thus applied to, as Hugh de St. Cyr goes on to relate, chose as judges of the question the ladies Guillemette de Benanguisse, Marie de Ventadour, and Madame de Montferan, to whom Savary declares he has no objection, saying that they were all three "si savantes en amour, qu'il se soumet à tout ce qu'elles diront."

It is rather provoking that the decision of the fair umpires is not recorded, the object of





Decorated and bound by M. Hervieu

THE HISTORY OF THE REIGN OF KING RICHARD THE FIRST

the narrator having been apparently merely to give the subject of the provost's poem.

A second adventure of our friend Savary, which the above mentioned historian extracts from another manuscript, is not less curious, and gives ample testimony to the competence, experience, and "savoir," of one of the judges in the former case, the lady Guillemette de Benanguisse.

The gallant Savary went one day to pay a visit to this lady, with whom also he was in love; and Rudel, lord of Bergerac, and Geoffroy Rudel went with him; "et ils la prièrent tous trois d'amour; car l'an auparavant elle avait retenu chacun d'eux pour son chevalier, sans qu'ils le sussent l'un l'autre. S'étant assis l'un à sa droite, l'autre à sa gauche et le troisième devant, chacun d'eux la regardait amoureusement; elle, comme femme la plus hardie qui fut jamais, commença à regarder amoureusement Geoffroy Rudel de Bleay, qui était assis devant elle; en même temps elle prit la main de Bergerac et la lui serra d'une manière fort tendre; pour monseigneur Savary, elle lui marcha sur le pied, en souriant et soupirant. Aucun ne sut quel signe d'amour avait eu son compagnon, jusqu'à ce qu'ils furent partis. Alors Geoffroy dit a Savary

comme la dame l'avait regardé; et Bergerac comment elle lui avait serré la main. Savary entendant le plaisir qu'elle avait fait à l'un et à l'autre en fut bien fâché, mais ne dit mot de celui qu'il avait eu pour son compte." But he went to the two troubadours, Gauslin Faydit and Hugues de la Bacallaria, and requested them to solve the question, to which of her three lovers had the lady Guillemette de Benanguisse shown the most regard.

I wish I could lay before the reader the opinion of these learned gentlemen upon this delicate point, but it has unfortunately not been preserved, though, like the suite of the gallant Savary's former adventure, it was made the subject of a "tenson." One of the most favourite topics of the troubadours was the pleading and arguing pro and con similar abstruse and delicate questions relating to the tender passion, the treatment of which gave scope for abundance of the far-fetched quaint conceits and burlesque seriousness so much in vogue among writers of every class at that period.

It seems, indeed, as if the ridiculous hair-splitting disputations of the schoolmen on subjects of a very different description had given rise to a taste for similar subtleties

among the patrons of the "light literature" of that day; and the fine-drawn arguments and ingeniously nonsensical disputations of the troubadours on questions of this sort—of which the manners of the time furnished them with ample abundance—appear often as if they were intended for burlesques upon the writings of their graver brother authors.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Return to Rochefort—The Hospital — Quack Doctor — The Grand Basha—Journey to Royan — Arrondissement of Marennes — Improvement—The Charente — Church Architecture in this part of the country—Royan—Its Position—Tour de Cordouan — Steamboat — Voyage to Bourdeaux — The Gironde — Vineyards of the Bourdeaux Grape—Lafitte — Chateau Margaux — St. Emilion—St. George—St. Julien—Scenery on the eastern side of the River — Pauillac—Blaye — Southern Manners and Figures — Junction of the Garonne and Dordogne — Lormont — Arrival at Bourdeaux.

I LEFT La Rochelle on the following morning, and returned to Rochefort by the diligence; and it was upon this occasion that I witnessed the disgraceful conduct, commented on in a former chapter, of the party of *comis voyageurs*, who proposed to themselves the pleasure of tormenting the poor *curé*.

I had intended to have left Rochefort for Royan the same afternoon, there to embark the next morning on board the steamer, which leaves that port every Saturday for Bourdeaux; but when I reached Rochefort all the

places in all the three diligences were taken by persons proceeding to Royan for the same purpose, and I was obliged to secure a seat in one which was to start early enough the next morning to reach Royan, a distance of twenty-nine miles, in time for the steamer, which was to leave that port at ten A. M.

I had, therefore, to amuse myself as well as I could during the remainder of the day at Rochefort. Not knowing what better to do with myself, I applied for permission to visit the arsenal again, but was told that it was contrary to the regulations to permit the same person to visit it twice *within the same week!*

I got rid of an hour by going through the vast hospital, and its tolerably large anatomical museum. 'The interminable "salles," through which I was led, one after another, appeared clean, airy, well arranged, and well attended.

In the evening I saw a man haranguing a very large crowd, in the centre of the extensive square in the middle of the town, from a raised platform in front of a caravan, and forthwith added myself to his audience. He was a neat, spruce, active little man, who, I found, united the vocations of perfumer, co-

median, quack-doctor, orator, and musician, and he appeared before us in each of these characters in succession. With the assistance of his wife, daughter, and son, he acted a little comedy, the plot of which was intended to inculcate the expediency of using perfumery. He then produced a variety of boxes and bottles, and, in a long and very discursive oration, proceeded to explain their various virtues. He dwelt at great length upon the impudence and ignorance of vile quacks, who pretended to have a specific for all diseases. This, he said, was the true test by which a quack might be known — they invariably professed to be in possession of a universal medicine. Now, for his part, he made no such pretensions. The pink liquid contained in the phial he held in his hand was a certain cure for all cutaneous diseases. Well! did it follow, therefore, that it was good for rheumatism or bile? Not at all! It was useless to talk any such trash to the educated people of the present enlightened generation. He said, therefore, openly and fairly, to those afflicted with other complaints except those of the skin, do not be tempted to purchase this elixir. It will do you no good! It will assuredly cure all cutaneous disorders in four-

and-twenty hours ; but what is that to you, who have nothing of that sort the matter with you? Was there, then, no relief for the rheumatic, the bilious, the sore-eyed, the deaf, the lame, and the paralytic! God forbid! Far from it! And he should be happy to attend to them, with medicines adapted to their disorders, as soon as ever he had disposed of the few remaining phials he possessed of that invaluable preparation for the skin.

The extreme candour and sensible discrimination of this discourse were attended with great success, and numerous purchasers pressed forward towards the caravan. We had then a song or two, then more medicine for some other class of sufferers, and then a long historical harangue, in which the speaker informed us that there had never lived more than three great men, and they were Voltaire, Rousseau, and Napoleon. It seemed as if the little man had a fellow-feeling of admiration for charlatans of all sorts.

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I slept that night at the sign of the Grand *Bacha*, and left Rochefort at five o'clock the next morning, in the full expectation of arriving at Royan just in time to see the steamer passing out of the harbour as we entered the

town. This was not, however, the case, for the boat was as unpunctual as the diligence, and we did not leave Royan till nearly eleven o'clock.

The road from Rochefort to Royan traverses the entire length of the arrondissement of Marennes, a low marshy district, which offers but little to interest a stranger in any way. A traveller, who passed through this country in 1798, found the roads practicable only for a horse, and that with difficulty, and the entire state of the population miserable in the extreme. The fields and vineyards were altogether neglected, the villages appeared to be in a state of dilapidation, and the people themselves were the victims of fever and ague, which reigned triumphantly over the whole district.

This would certainly be very far from a fair description of the arrondissement of Marennes at the present day. The drainage of the marshes has in a great degree rendered the population of these low grounds a healthy one. The roads, though not yet very good, are travelled over by diligences in all seasons of the year, and the culture of the fields appeared to me to be on a level with the agriculture of the surrounding districts. A good

deal of wine is grown, almost entirely for the manufacture of brandy; and there are a good many grazing lands. On the coast, a very considerable quantity of salt is made, and there is also an oyster fishery of some importance.

Soon after we had cleared the fortifications of Rochefort and their outworks, we had to cross the Charente, here a broad estuary, in a ferryboat, into which the diligence drove. The tide in this river rises and falls upwards of twenty feet; and the softness of the soil through and over which it runs, and the great depth of mud at its bottom, the constantly increasing spoils of the meadows on its banks, which the current has not energy enough to sweep out to sea, are great impediments to bridge-building along the whole course of this river below Saintes.

We passed through three or four villages, in the churches of all of which I remarked the round or Norman architecture. In that of St. Pierre, more especially, which we passed through a little before arriving at Royan, I observed the west front, portal, and porch of a partially ruined church, which had been richly ornamented in the Norman style.

Royan has been for some years past an in-

creasing and thriving place, and has now the appearance of a quiet and retired, but cheerful little port. An establishment for sea-bathing has recently been set on foot there, and the Bordelais, the citizens of Rochefort, and the Rochellais, come there during the autumn to enjoy sea-water, change of scene, and idleness. The coast is as devoid of beauty and interest as the shore of the sea can ever be, and the yellow colour of the immense mass of water, brought down to it by the Gironde, goes far to destroy all the beautiful effects and pleasing associations connected with the deep blue or transparent green waves of the ocean.

Royan is situated at the bottom of a little bay at the mouth of the Gironde, immediately opposite to the celebrated "Tour de Cordouan." This lighthouse is built on a rock, which is said to have been once connected with the main land of Medoc, on the coast of the department de la Gironde. Tradition says that Louis-le-Débonnaire built on the site of the present lighthouse a small tower, on which men were stationed, who blew horns continually, day and night, to warn navigators against the dangers of the rocks. The tower, as it now stands, was planned by Louis

de Foix, the most celebrated French architect of the fifteenth century. It was not executed, however, till the end of the sixteenth. In the interior of the building are to be seen the busts of Henry II., Henry IV., Louis XIV., and Louis XV. Up to 1782, the warning light was supplied by a charcoal fire, which was kept burning on the summit; and was at that date replaced by a revolving light, consisting of four enormous lamps. The rock on which the tower of Cordouan stands is rendered unapproachable by the least bad weather, and the guardians are therefore always supplied, at the approach of winter, with a six months' provision of food.

There is no quay at Royan, alongside of which the steamer can come for the passengers to step on board; and as "La Ville de Blaye," for so was our boat called, was fuming and fussing with a great appearance of impatience in the bay, I and the others who had arrived by the same coach lost no time in stepping into a little fishing-boat, which conveyed us on board her.

The voyage from Royan to Bourdeaux is fully as rich in interest of every kind and beauty as the route from Rochefort to Royan is dull and disagreeable. The distance is

about seventy-five miles, which the boat undertakes to perform in six hours. The captain swore most positively that we should accomplish it within a quarter of an hour more than the stated time ; so I thought I was very well off to be not more than seven hours and a half on the voyage.

The Gironde, though as yellow as the Tiber can possibly be, is a magnificent estuary, and continues for many a league up the country to be a noble extent of water. The western shore is perfectly flat, and the land on that bank is a mere narrow strip between the river and the Landes, which border the sea-coast for many a dreary league nearly the whole distance between the mouth of the Gironde and Bayonne. But this narrow strip of flat land is probably the most valuable cultivated ground in the world. For, from the alluvial soil of its vineyards are produced those wines whose exquisite flavour and rare union of happy qualities have caused them to be celebrated and sought for over the whole civilized world. Here are the cantons of Medoc. Here are the matchless vineyards of Lafitte and Chateau Margaux, St. George and St. Julien. However ugly, physically speaking, the shore may be on which such products grow, who

could look on it with unmoved eye! Is it not classic ground! And are not the names of its fields and villages associated in the minds of all of us intimately and for ever with the memory of joyous meetings and bright hours!

As the boat passed rapidly, ah, all too rapidly! by the different villages of this nectar-dripping shore, each well known name recalls to the palate's memory the peculiar flavour of its own choice produce; and the tantalized mouth waters with the series of delicious recollections thus suggested to it in quick succession. But, alas! how small, how lamentably small, are the favoured spots which produce this unrivalled grape! Would one not suppose, from the never-failing announcements of thousands of wine-merchants in all parts of the known world, that Nature provided an abundance of her choicest gifts in accurate proportion to the orders of their customers. One would imagine that it could never happen that there should be no more Lafitte, and be led to indulge in vague ideas of infinite Chateau Margaux. Vain hopes!

We are told that the supply is regulated by the demand!

Vain sophistry! False, fleeting, perjured, political economists! For who would not

demand that the mighty Gironde should run with the glorious juice, ruddy and bright! *Is not the demand very large?* But the supply is lamentably small. And oh! my cockney countrymen! did ye but know how much larger is the quantity of these choicest wines consumed by the deluded inhabitants of your mighty city than all the prime vineyards of Bourdeaux can produce, how sadly shorn of its glories would be the cellar-book of many a suburban *willar!* It is true, certainly — and a most gratifying reflection it is — that the generous inhabitants of this favoured clime reserve from their annual vintage by far the largest portion of their most highly-valued wines for the drinking of us islanders, because they know we like it so much; but still there is far from enough for us all! It is but too evident that Nature intended Lafitte and Chateau Margaux to be drunk by but a few of her children; and yet, with this immutable and unquestionable fact before their eyes, men have declared that she intended them all to be equal!

Oh, monstrous!

* * * * *

The other side of the river, the eastern bank that is, is in many parts picturesque. The

character of the country is, on this side, entirely different from that which lies between the river and the ocean. It is in no part flat; and sometimes rises in yellow sandy cliffs, of no great height, which here and there contrast to good effect with masses of dark green foliage, and white, cheerful-looking houses. In some places, where the sand assumes the consistency of stone, habitations have been hollowed out of it, like those in the chalky banks of the Loire in Anjou.

As we advanced southward, the Gironde grew very gradually narrow, and the eastern bank higher, more varied, and more richly wooded. We paused a few minutes at Pauillac and at Blaye, the former on the western, and the latter a little farther to the south, on the eastern bank of the river. Both are thriving commercial little ports, and serve as entrepôts to the commerce of Bourdeaux. At several other points of our passage, as we neared the city, we took in or dropped passengers by the aid of small boats from the shore; and, in the latter case, it was frequently amusing to observe the animation and warm demonstrative manner of the south, as some villager, returning to his home from a long expedition to the north, descended into

the boat which was to convey him on shore. They frequently came alongside to receive the expected traveller, filled with a crowd of his friends, come off from the shore to welcome him home. Then there would arise such a clamour as he stepped among the crowd, which could scarcely find standing-room in the boat, and such a kissing, and embracing, and bustling, as threatened to upset it.

Picturesque-looking fellows they were, too, for the most part, with tremendous large black beards and whiskers, short, olive-coloured velveteen jackets, red cotton sashes, coffee-coloured linsey-woolsey trowsers, and broad-brimmed hats. The Bordelaises, too, for the most part, are very pretty — small, but with neat, active, well-made figures, with an almost invariably beautifully-formed neck and well-turned shoulders; and black eyes, which look as if they would burn a round hole in a deal board as surely and more quickly than the rays of their own bright sun, collected into a focus by a burning glass.

Soon after passing Blaye, we reached the birthplace of the Gironde, which is the junction of the Garonne and the Dordogne. The union of these two large rivers forms the estuary which is called the Gironde, and gives

that name to the department of which Bourdeaux is the capital. Leaving the Dordogne to the left, we entered the Garonne, which continues for some time a course almost due north, and advancing between banks increasing in beauty every instant, we soon turned round the picturesque promontory of Lormont, whose richly-wooded hill is thickly studded with the neat, bright-looking country residences of the rich merchants of Bourdeaux, and then, rushing in amid a crowd of ships of all nations, found ourselves suddenly in front of the magnificently-curving line of quays which extend along the entire length of the superb city.

The approach to a large and important commercial town by water is, in almost every instance, more striking to a stranger than the entrance to it from the landward. In most cases, in entering by the road the traveller has to pass through straggling and miserable-looking outskirts—the dwellings of the indigent and the squalid—which are the unfailing, and, alas! too inevitable accompaniments of commerce and the generation of commercial wealth. But by water the traveller comes at once into the heart of all the pride and glory of a mercantile community.

It was Saturday night when I arrived at Bourdeaux, and the innumerable vessels were all decked with their many coloured flags in honour of the eve of the festival. It would be difficult to conceive a scene of more life, movement, and gaiety, than the broad bosom of the Garonne then presented; and the truly beautiful city could not have been seen for the first time under more favourable circumstances.

CHAPTER XL.

Bordeaux—Walk to the Cemetery of the Chartreuse — Fête Day — Solitary Mourner—Remarkable Epitaph—Monumental Bathos —Departure for Angoulême — Hill on the other side of the Garonne—View of Bordeaux thence—New Suspension Bridge over the Dordogne—Its construction—Appearance of the River—Fatal Accident—Mode of proving a Suspension Bridge—Ferryboat over the Dordogne—Travelling Companion in the Diligence—Opinion in France respecting England's Emancipation of her Negroes — Prices of Bourdeaux Wine—Its Qualities —Barbesieux—Arrival at Angoulême.

BOURDEAUX is a very beautiful city, and I passed a week there with much satisfaction. Its magnificent river, with its crowds of shipping of all sorts, sizes, countries, and destinations, its fine bridge, and immensely long and symmetrically-curved line of broad quays, its public buildings, theatres, and churches, its "places," the handsomest in France, its archiepiscopal cathedral, and 247,748 inhabitants, with their manners, habits, and characteristics, its rich merchants and extended commerce, its productive and highly-favoured

environs, and its fortunate position, all combine to render Bourdeaux the finest provincial city in France, and one calculated to interest a stranger in many ways.

An adequate description of the town, however, and a notice of all that it contains worthy of a traveller's attention, would require a far larger space than I can now afford to it. By its position, moreover, Bourdeaux can hardly be deemed to belong to my present subject; and I shall therefore now leave it, in the hope of at some future time meeting my reader there again, when it may be our starting point for an excursion through the south of France.

Before we proceed, however, on our way northwards, I must tell the reader a little incident, which I witnessed on the last evening of my stay at Bourdeaux. It was a fête day, and splendid weather—the delicious though still hot evening of a tremendously blazing day. The population, gay in their holiday costumes, were streaming out of the gates of the city, filling every guinguette with laughing, dancing, chattering crowds, while the entire road was turned into the semblance of a vast tulip-bed by the bright, gay-looking, thousand-coloured headkerchiefs of the Bour-

delaises grisettes, and the whole air rang with their noisy merriment. Amid this thoughtless, happy multitude, pursuing her way as steadily as the thousand constantly recurring obstacles would permit, I observed a woman, marked not more strongly by her garb, which was entirely black, in the midst of all the flaunting brilliant tints around her, than by her mien and manner, as contrasted with the reckless gaiety of the crowd.

She was evidently a mourner. And it was not long before I perceived that she was wending towards the mourner's melancholy trysting-place with the lost ones, the cemetery of the city.

This vast city of the dead, to which pass the entire generations of Bourdeaux's hundreds of thousands of inhabitants, is termed, from an ancient monastery which once possessed the spot, the Chartreuse. It is a large space, enclosed with high walls, to the eastward of the town; and its extent, and the crowded state of its innumerable graves and tombstones, may be conceived from the fact of its being the sole repository for the dead of the whole city.

The solitary mourner turned in at the great iron gate, and pursued her way among the

thickly-crowded tombstones, without pausing to select her path, or raising her eyes from the ground. It was evident that the narrow path she was treading was familiar to her from long habit. I followed her into the cemetery; for the train of thought, which my observation of her had engendered in my mind, was more congenial with the aspect of this last resting-place of all the noisy crowd now sporting without its walls than with their present mirth.

We were the only people among the tombs that day of holiday, rejoicing, and festivity—the widow and I — for such I judged her to be; and it was easy to mark from a distance her black figure gliding silently and swiftly along between the tall white stone tombs, in a direct line towards a distant part of the cemetery. At length she reached the object of her visit; and I saw her throw herself forward on a flat flagstone, at the head of which stood a small obelisk. She bent forwards till her forehead rested on the flagstone, and, with her hands clasped together over her head, remained in that attitude of utter prostration — the manifestation, doubtless, of mental prostration as abject — for, I should think, more than half an hour.

I employed this time in wandering among the monuments which are crowded in every part of the vast space, and waiting till she should return from her sad visit; for I felt a great curiosity to see the inscription on the tomb which she had come to visit; and her sorrow was evidently too real and too sacred for me to dream of disturbing its indulgence by approaching so near her as to attract her attention.

When at length she arose and slowly departed, leaving me the sole occupant of the sombre and melancholy region, I sought out the tomb whose tenants had been lamented with such genuine and deep sorrow, and read upon the little obelisk no other words but these—

QUATRE FOIS L'ESPERANCE!
QUATRE FOIS LE DOULEUR!

There was no other word on the stone whatsoever—no name, no date. But it was impossible to mistake the purport of these simple words, more especially with the commentary on them which was furnished by the circumstances I had just witnessed. Four times had the premature tomb yawned and closed upon the parent's hope: and the solitary mourner, who on the day of gladness

and rejoicing had come to spend *her* holiday in the indulgence of her grief, was a mother weeping for her children, who would not be comforted because they were not.

I thought that I had never seen an epitaph so genuinely touching, or which so fully told the short history of a lost infant's life, and the dreary blank which, brief as had been its existence, its death had left behind it, than these few short words. Four times had the pangs of travail been hailed by the mother's bosom as the glad tidings of joy, and the birth of new hope. Four times had the heart which seemed dead and withered by the winter of its bereavement put forth fresh buds at the treacherous promise of a new spring; and as often had the bitterness of disappointment and the dreary void of hopelessness succeeded to it.

I remained in the cemetery till it grew dusk, reading a vast variety of epitaphs, chronicling as usual the deaths of so large a proportion of good husbands, good wives, good fathers, good mothers, and good sons, among the last generation, as fully to justify the "*laudatores temporis acti*" for deeming the days of our fathers very far preferable to the present. One tomb had for all inscription the words

“LA L'ORAGE—ICI LE CALME;” applicable enough to the dead quietude of the place as contrasted with the shouts of the revelling crowd still heard at a distance.

On several tombstones I read “Un De profundis *s'il vous plait.*” Would it be possible for any other than a Frenchman to accomplish so splendid a specimen of bathos!

On the following morning, I climbed to the place I had secured in the cabriolet of a diligence bound for Angoulême, and left Bourdeaux with an “au revoir,” which I shall be much disappointed if I do not accomplish.

We crossed the long handsome bridge over the Garonne, and then mounted the steep hill, which, at the distance of a mile or so from the bank, rises on the other side of the river. From the top of this there is a very fine view of the town, exhibiting its entire length from the ancient tower of St. Michel at the southern, to the tall chimney of a manufactory at the northern extremity of the town. Yet I am inclined to think that the traveller who approaches Bourdeaux by this, the great road from Paris, has not so striking or imposing a first view of the city as he who arrives, as I did, by the Garonne. The first would lead him to form a more just and accurate idea of the

size and extent of the town; but the latter brings him suddenly into the midst of its bustle and the evidences of its wealth and prosperity, and places him at once in the handsomest and most prepossessing part of the city.

Not many miles from Bourdeaux, it is necessary for all communications with Paris and the north to cross the Dordogne, and this has always been hitherto, and was still, at the period of my journey, accomplished by means of a ferry. A great deal of time was thus lost, and much trouble and inconvenience was occasioned. But the river is a great breadth, and for many years the attempt to throw a bridge across it was never thought of. This, has, however, now been done, and the work is the finest thing of the kind which has yet been executed in France. It is a suspension-bridge, and wonderfully light and airy in appearance. Besides the approaches to it, supported on either side by twenty-seven arches, gradually rising in height, the structure is divided into five portions—arches they cannot be called—each of which is a hundred and ten paces in length, from pier to pier. The piers are hollow iron pillars, and are steadied and supported by chains, which pass from the summit of each to that part of the

next one which is level with the footway of the bridge. These supports by no means injure the general appearance of the fabric, but, crossing each other as they do with a fine sweeping catenary curve, are rather ornamental than otherwise.

The elevation above the surface of the water is very great—sufficient to allow ships of any size to pass beneath—and this, together with the extreme apparent slightness of the construction, makes the crossing it very much resemble, especially to giddy heads, the operation of walking upon a tight rope. I stood gazing for many minutes on the turbid and swift mass of yellow water rushing far below, and watching several little white-sailed, schooner-rigged boats, with all their canvas set, which were coming up the river gallantly, for there was a fine stiff breeze blowing, that swung the light bridge to and fro very perceptibly, and increased the almost nervous sensation of being suspended in mid-air. Our neighbours must take care that they do not let their aspirations after grace and elegance in the construction of such fabrics, of which a very great number have lately been accomplished in France, lead them to neglect solidity too far. While I was in this

part of France, a suspension-bridge over this same river, some distance higher up the stream, gave way, while a heavy vehicle was passing over it, and every soul in it perished. It was one of the newly-established prisoners' vans for carrying to their destination the criminals condemned to the galleys, instead of marching them through the country in long chains, as was the case formerly. Each prisoner is confined in them in a separate cell, and was of course upon the occasion in question altogether unable to help himself.

The splendid suspension-bridge, which has very recently been finished on the road from Brest to Nantes over the embouchure of the Vilaine, at Roche Bernard, was to be, and, I believe, has ere this been tried in a manner which would seem very satisfactory. A frigate, with all her guns and stores, was to be brought underneath the bridge at high water, and to be firmly attached to it, so as to be left suspended under the middle of the bridge by the retiring tide. It should seem that such an experiment as this would be quite conclusive as to the strength of the bridge being sufficient for any possible purpose to which a bridge could be put. But still I conceive that the suspending chains would sus-

tain an infinitely greater weight, thus steadily and gradually brought to bear on them, than they would if the mass were suddenly thrown upon them, and then continued in motion, instead of remaining perfectly still.

The bridge over the Dordogne at Cubsac—the name of a village which the road passes through, a little after crossing the river, on coming from Bourdeaux—was not yet opened when I was there, but was to be so in less than a month. The diligence, therefore, in which I was, proceeded as usual to the ferry, and I should have had no opportunity of going upon the bridge, had I not come out of Bourdeaux the day before for the express purpose of visiting it.

The old ferryboat, now in its last days, is an enormous machine in the shape of a huge, nearly square platform, with a little circular-roofed house in the middle of it, in which the eight horses worked, whose mill-like progress impelled the boat. I remember crossing the river Niagara, near Buffalo, on a ferryboat worked in the same manner; but that was a cockle-shell compared to the colossal ferryboat of the Dordogne. It was waiting for the diligence when we arrived, having already got the rest of its load on board. There were

ten loaded waggons, with their several teams ; three or four other carriages, and several more horses. All these things were so arranged as to leave just room for the diligence to drive in among them ; and the numerous human passengers stowed themselves among the waggons and horses as they best might. A strange-looking sight the huge, floating conglomeration must have presented to one viewing it from without, as it slowly but steadily made its way across the stream.

The water of the Dordogne is the most deeply yellow of any river I ever saw. It looks like a thick, turbulent stream of plasterer's yellow wash, and must evidently carry with it an immense quantity of soil, pillaged in some part of its journey thither from the heights of Mont d'Or.

My companion in the cabriolet of the diligence was a young wine-merchant of Bourdeaux, who was going to look after the affairs of his house at their entrepôt at Bercy, the suburb on the Seine, outside the barrier of Paris, at which all the wine from the south destined for the consumption of the capital arrives. Most of the wine-merchants of Bourdeaux have a dépôt there, so as to avoid paying the octroi duty before the wine is wanted for consumption.

I found him an intelligent and pleasant coach companion enough, and had a good deal of conversation with him. Though he expressed himself with perfect civility, he did not attempt to conceal his great dislike of England, and entered at great length into all her misdeeds and crimes against France. One of the worst of these was her emancipation of her West Indian slaves. Was it not quite clear that her only object in so doing was to ruin the colonial trade of France by setting the example before her negroes, and compelling them eventually to do the same?

But, if such ruin to West Indian trade must follow from the measure, did not England injure herself by it to a much greater extent than France was or could be damaged?

Oh! that was all very specious and plausible. But it was easy to see what England's policy was. She was willing to sacrifice her West Indian colonies, which were to her a bagatelle, comparatively speaking, for the sake of a much greater object, which was to push and foster the trade of her East Indian empire, and force France to become a customer in that market by destroying her West Indian colonies.

All this I had heard more than once before ;

and it is the firm belief of many, probably the great majority of Frenchmen, that, in reality, England emancipated her slaves solely and entirely with the view of injuring them to our own profit. As to attempting to explain to them the real motives, or to tell them of the gradually increasing force of public opinion on the subject, which, first set in motion by a small knot of good men, in process of time, vires acquirens eundo, became powerful enough to carry it in spite of all opposition, it is quite useless. They are totally unable to comprehend such a thing; and laugh outright at your attempting to impose on them so monstrous an absurdity as the assertion that a large nation, of its own will and good pleasure, paid the to them almost inconceivable sum of twenty millions sterling, with the hope of no profit whatsoever, and merely from motives of religious duty and Christian philanthropy.

On the qualities, nature, prices, and management of Bourdeaux wine, I found my companion much more at home than upon the domestic policy of England, and got from him much interesting information. Among other things, he told me several anecdotes of prices almost incredible given for choice wines; but

mentioned none so high as that which another merchant told me of, upon another occasion. He had recently sold, he said, a thousand bottles of Chateau Margaux to the emperor of Russia, at thirty-six francs a bottle. It was forty-four years old, and had a bouquet, which its owner assured me scented strongly the whole of a large room as soon as ever it was opened ; nor had its age destroyed a particle of its colour, flavour, or even strength. In short, it had all the qualities which a good judge of Bordeaux wine thus sums up as essential to its perfection. “ Cette liqueur délicieuse, parvenue a son plus haut degré de qualité, doit être pourvue d’une belle couleur, d’un bouquet qui participe de la violette, de beaucoup de finesse, et d’une saveur infiniment agréable ; elle doit avoir de la force, sans être capiteuse, ranimer l’estomac en respectant la tête, et en laissant l’haleine pure et la bouche fraîche.”

A few leagues beyond Cussac the road enters the department of La Charente Inférieure, a narrow corner of which it crosses, and then passes the frontier of the department de la Charente. Soon after this we reached Barbesieux, a chef lieu d’arrondissement, which has some picturesque remains of an

old castle, and is finely situated on a hill looking over a rich, verdant basin of fertile-looking soil, which extends farther than the eye can reach.

The little town was formerly fortified, and was deemed, till the seventeenth century, at which period its walls were razed, a place of some military importance. It was formerly called Barbezil, and was in old times a seigneurie belonging to the powerful Angoumois family, La Rochefoucauld. The castle, whose remains now serve for a prison, was dismantled and in part demolished by the English during the long wars in Guyenne.

As we passed through the town, a small, neat-looking inn was pointed out to me by one of my fellow-travellers, as having been upon many occasions the temporary resting-place of royalty. He named several crowned heads, who, in the course of their passage through France upon different occasions, had all stopped for the night at the modest-looking inn in the little town of Barbesieux. I was at a loss to understand the reason for the preference given to this little chef lieu d'arrondissement over the ancient provincial capital, Angoulême. But my subsequent experience of the Angoulême inns compelled

me to admit that royalty had judiciously chosen where to rest its weary limbs.

The diligence ought to have arrived at Angoulême at half-past seven; so, as it is an important road, upon which great exertion is made to do the work punctually and well, we reached our destination at half past nine.

CHAPTER XLI.

Hotel at Angoulême—Characteristics of a bad Inn—The Kitchen—
 Beau Ideal of a Cook—Preparations for Supper—Advice to Travellers
 ament this Matter — No Butter at Angoulême — Beds in
 French Inns—Walk to the Abbaye de la Couronne—The Ruins
 —The Situation of the Abbey—Wealth of the Monks—Manu-
 facture of Paper in the Angoumois—Its importance—Corporation
 of Paper-Makers—Their Exclusiveness and Privileges—The
 Diseases to which they are subject—Return to Angoulême—A
 Ducking—Entrée into Angoulême.

THE inn at Angoulême, to which the dili-
 gence brought me, was one of the worst it
 has even been my lot to fall upon in any
 country. There are many signs and warn-
 ings which, to an experienced eye, betoken
 the badness or excellence of an hostelry. But
 it was late and dark ; the town was miserably
 lighted, or rather not lighted at all ; and it
 just then began to rain fast and heavily. So,
 despite sundry misgivings as to the nature of
 the quarters I was likely to meet with, I was
 fain to house myself in the only shelter that
 presented itself, and make up my mind to

take things as they came, for better or worse, for the next twelve hours.

The house, though a large one, seemed deserted, and I verily believe that I was the only guest it boasted. The inmates, too, who had appeared on the arrival of the diligence, seemed to have all vanished as soon as the bustle occasioned by that event had subsided. After in vain calling and bawling, and obtaining from two or three anomalous-looking, half-dressed, lounging animals in sabots no other reply than "Je n'en scai rien, moi," to my inquiries for "garçons" and "filles," I dragged my portmanteau into the shelter of the open doorway, and groped my way along a dark passage, till I at length found myself in the kitchen. A miserable-looking slender candle, broken in half, was hanging far out of the perpendicular from a tall brass candlestick, and wasting its sweetness and its substance in large fat drops, which fell fast and thick in a slowly-refrigerating pool upon the kitchen-table. A few embers were smouldering upon the hearth, and the lord of this uninviting castle of indolence, the cook, unmistakeably proclaimed to be such by his filthy apron, once white jacket, and extra-greasy nightcap, was snoring in a high-backed chair in the chimney corner.

Here was pleasing prospect for a supperless mortal, who had travelled ninety-four miles in a French diligence without eating! I waked "Monsieur le chef," however, and at length succeeded, after he had leisurely taken sufficient time to yawn, and stretch himself, and scratch his head, in making him comprehend my wants. He vouchsafed not a word in reply, but slowly and sulkily took from a shelf a strange-shaped, little, coverless, earthen vase, that looked as if it had just been exhumed from amid the relics of Herculaneum, and planted it among the nearly extinct ashes on the hearth. 'This contained, as I discovered in due course, the delectable liquid which was to figure on my supper-table as "potage." His next operation was to unhook from an iron hoop, which hung from the ceiling, a black-looking fragment of amorphous animal matter, which a more close examination shewed to be the scrag end of neck of mutton; and this, with a long knife, drawn from an ominously polished leathern case that was suspended at his apron-string, he proceeded to sever into-lumps, to be transformed, despite the rebellious resistance of bone and gristle, by assiduous banging, into "cotelettes." I pointed out to him, while

thus engaged, the condition of his candle, which he suffered to continue unheeded its odoriferous droppings on the table, within an inch or two of the spot on which he was manufacturing "cotelettes." I had better have minded my own affairs, for the result of my interference was his seizing the half-melted candle in his fist, severing it in two with the knife of all work, and, after thus restoring it to the perpendicular, proceeding with the preparation of the cutlets, without even the ceremony of so much as wiping either his hands or the knife. This was done before my face, and evidently without the slightest idea entering the head of Monsieur le Chef that this meeting of the fats was in any wise objectionable or unusual.

Hungry travellers! be warned by me, and be wise! Confine yourselves to the precincts of the *salle-à-manger*, and do not seek to pry into the mysteries of a French kitchen, or scrutinize too closely the antecedent history of the viands to be set before you, or, like me, you may chance to go hungry to bed.

When at length I found myself in the *salle-à-manger*, with my supper before me, it may easily be supposed that I felt no great inclination for the principal part of it—the unfor-

tunate outlets. The soup I managed to swallow; and then, being still very hungry, I asked for some butter, that I might finish my supper with bread and butter. But I was told that there was none: and I subsequently found that butter is a luxury almost unknown throughout nearly the whole of the Angoumois, and even in its capital, Angoulême. The little they have is brought from a considerable distance.

Dry bread and miserable vin de pays, therefore, were my fare that night; and better would it have been for me if my "lodgings" had been "on the cold ground," than in the bed, to which a slatternly, dirty, slipshod girl piloted me, when I had finished my scanty repast. It is rare in France to find bad or dirty beds. In small country inns, where a traveller would scarcely expect to find any accommodation at all for the night, he will frequently meet with better beds than at a large inn in a first-rate town in England. But the house of mine host at Angoulême proved an exception to this general rule; and I had not passed above an hour in the bed assigned me before I was compelled to quit it, and seek what rest I might be able to find in a chair, by the vermin with which it swarmed.

“Punaise” I presume to be derived from the *punishment* of the *ease* of those who would fain sleep, inflicted by the active little creatures so named. The bugs, like Macbeth, had murdered sleep, and I sat miserable, tired, sleepy, but not able to sleep, watching for the first streak of morning light to escape from the intolerable hole into which my ill stars had thrown me.

At break of day, therefore, I found my way out of the house, with the intention of employing the hours before breakfast in a walk to the ruins of the celebrated abbey “de la Couronne,” situated about four miles to the south of Angoulême. Situated in a delicious little green valley, watered by a rapid, rippling streamlet, this rich abbey, one of the most splendid in France, by some accident or other escaped destruction at the period of the revolution. But, having become the property of an individual, it was destroyed in 1808 for the sake of the materials, to the great disgrace of the province and the nation, which, by the sacrifice of a small sum, might have preserved a noble specimen of the richest mediæval ecclesiastical architecture.

The buildings of the monastery, with the

exception of a portion of them which is now occupied as a farmhouse, have been entirely destroyed ; but enough still remains of the church to shew what a magnificent structure it must have been. Its interior measurement was two hundred and two French feet, by eighty-nine broad ; and the cloisters, which have entirely perished, were on a scale proportionable to the noble dimensions of the church. One fine window at the east end, part of a highly-ornamented portal-arch at the west front, and part of the rose-window above it, the wall of an entire side, &c , still remain. Immense masses of pillars, which have been hurled from the proud height where the vaults of the light roof reposed upon them, lie strewn upon the ground within the nave, still so firmly cemented together, as to give the Vandals, who seek amid the ruins of the mighty fabric thus fallen from its high estate the materials for their own mean constructions, almost as much labour to appropriate the stone, so cunningly put together by the architects of the thirteenth century, as to cut it from the quarry.

The hand of some pious wanderer, indignant at the unworthy spoliation, had painted in enormous black letters on the re-

maining wall of the aisle some verses beginning—

“ Anarchistes maudits, maltraitant les beaux arts
Ignorez vous que Dieu”

The rest was effaced.

The Augustins, to whom this abbey, originally founded in 1122,* belonged, had, as the monks never failed to do, well chosen their situation. The smiling verdure of the well-watered little valley in which it stood, forms an agreeable contrast to the bleak, open, but not unfertile, hills of light calcareous soil, which occupy the country between it and Angoulême. It reminded me of some of the irrigated valleys, which are to be found among the hills in some parts of Wiltshire, though the high grounds which bound the valley of La Couronne are more fertile than the generality of the soil on the Wiltshire downs. The good fathers of St. Augustin enjoyed in all ways the advantages of their position; and, while their quiet vale and stream flowing beneath their walls afforded them fish for Fridays, and rich grazing grounds for their beeves, their granaries were amply stored with the produce of broad corn-lands, extending over the neighbouring hills. For the

* See Appendix, No. 1.

garniture of their cellars the good monks were, I doubt not, contented to go farther afield; or, if any of the thin, sharp juice of the Angoumois vineyards found its way into their vaults, it could only have been destined for the consumption of the lay brethren.

There are several paper-mills now established in this as well as in many other of the valleys of the Angoumois; and the manufacture of the papers, known for many years in France under the name of "papiers d'Angoulême," as the best the country can produce, constitutes, after the growth and distillation of brandy, the most important commerce of the country. There are at the present day about thirty-five mills, which produce ordinarily about a hundred thousand reams of paper annually, and the net profits of the manufacture are estimated at 23,400 francs.

The workmen in these paper-mills in the Angoumois form an ancient corporation, the most exclusive and jealous of their asserted rights and privileges of any in France. They contrive to make their trade a sort of hereditary property, and, for the purpose of rendering it such, never marry except among themselves. Their children are exclusively admitted to the manufactories to learn their

fathers' trade ; and every effort on the part of the master manufacturers to break through the monopoly thus maintained has proved fruitless. Some years ago, when the conscription had thinned the numbers of the workmen, and there remained barely sufficient to carry on the work of the manufactories, the masters, fearing to be left without workmen, agreed together to establish a fund, from which every paper-maker who, from age or sickness, should be out of work should be maintained, on the sole condition that the workmen would permit one stranger only for each vat, or "cuve," as it is termed, to be introduced into the manufactories as apprentices. This they at first agreed to. Several distressed families of workmen received immediate relief from the established fund, and the stipulated number of apprentices were placed in the workshops. Within six months, however, every single one of the young strangers were driven from the various establishments, either by the bad treatment of the old workmen, or by their refusing to give them any instruction in the business ; and the monopoly remained as firm as ever.

This monopoly of the trade puts the masters in a great degree at the mercy of the

men, and enables the latter to claim and enforce various immemorial privileges. Thus should the mill stop work for want of orders, or for want of water, or for the sake of repairs, the workmen insist on being paid exactly as if they were at work, and absolutely succeed in compelling their employers to submit to this rule. Then, besides the Sundays and festivals, fixed by the Concordat, they keep as holidays no less than forty-one of the old festivals to the great inconvenience of the establishment; and have ever constantly refused to work on those days, though tempted to do so by extra pay.

With the exception, however, of good wages and certain employment, the trade, which they so jealously insist on keeping to themselves and their own descendants, does not seem to be a very inviting one. From the humid nature of the localities in which their residences are necessarily always placed, and more still from the moist and water-charged atmosphere which they continually breathe in the paper-mills, the employment is very far from being a healthy one; and the people engaged in it are rarely long-lived. They are peculiarly afflicted with scorbutic complaints, chronic rheumatism, swelling of the lower

members, and all varieties of diseases of the lungs. It has been observed, also, that in those years in which wine is less plentiful, the amount of sickness among them is very materially increased.

The abbey "de la Couronne" is situated not far from the great highroad to Bourdeaux, and I had followed this in coming to it. But after spending nearly a couple of hours in lingering among the ruins and rambling a little way up the valley, I was tempted to return to Angoulême across the fields, which I thought I should have no difficulty in doing, as the whole country appeared to be open and uninclosed. This turned out, however, a more difficult enterprize than I had anticipated, for, between the high grounds in the immediate neighbourhood of La Couronne and the city, I found another green valley, similar to that in which the abbey stands, but more extensively watered. Bridges there were none; and after many turnings and windings, which prolonged my morning's ramble much farther into the heat of the day than my breakfastless energies had bargained for, I found myself inextricably involved in a labyrinth of streams and marshy meadows. What was to be done? There was the town, high on its hill, apparently at a

very little distance before me, and in the town was my breakfast, which I began to be somewhat impatient to reach.

To retrace my steps, and regain the dusty highroad, was, under these circumstances, out of the question. There was nothing for it but to make a steeple-chase of it, with the crumbling old tower of Angoulême cathedral for the winning-post, and a *plate* at the breakfast-table of some better hostelry than my last night's quarters for the prize. So I dashed at it, and succeeded in clearing three or four streams, with no other inconvenience than wet feet, till at last a desperate leap at the principal brook landed me, or rather watered me, very little beyond the middle of it. In I went over head and ears, and had some little difficulty in scrambling out by the help of a willow on the other side. I had thus passed the principal obstacle between me and the city, but I was wet through, and had still a mile or two to perform in this condition, with the steep ascent to the town at the end of it; and garments stiff and heavy with water are by no means favourable to the performance of gymnastics of any kind.

The distance was, however, at last accomplished, and I had the satisfaction of making

a very considerable sensation by my appearance among the worthy citizens of Angoulême, who were all abroad to make their marketings in the “*marché aux légumes*,” as I crossed it in my way to my newly-selected inn—a much better than my last, though not particularly excellent one.

My *entrée* into the kitchen, too, where the landlady, the “*chef*,” and his assistants, were all actively engaged in preparing the ten o’clock table d’hôte breakfast, was not made without considerable *eclat*, and I was obliged to give a detailed and circumstantial account of my adventures before I could prevail on any one to show me the way to a room where I might refit.

Not that any of the inquiries and cross-questionings of the good people, though somewhat inopportune, were made in any other spirit than that of perfect good-humour and civility, though interrupted again and again by bursts of laughter at the miserable figure I cut, as well as at my recital of my adventures.

When at length their mirth and their curiosity were satisfied, they busied themselves in doing all they could to repair the damage done to my travelling wardrobe. More fire was

put on to dry my things; warm water — a very unusual luxury—was taken up stairs for my comfort; and the landlady, in the plenitude of her benevolence, offered to lend me, if I needed the accommodation, a pair of her husband's "culottes."

CHAPTER XLII.

Angoulême—Position of the Town — Ancient Tradition respecting its Origin—Various Names by which the Town is called in Ancient Authors—Derivation of the Name — Different Views from the Public Walks—Road from Bourdeaux—Want of Water—Temperature of the Town—Valley of the Anguienne—The Cathedral—Style of its Architecture—Contrasted with the Norman Architecture—Figures on the West Front—Cupolas over the Nave—The Chapelle Saint Gelais—Members of that Family—Octavien de Saint Gelais, the Bishop—His Character—His Son, the Poet—Specimen of his Talents —Francis I.—Assaut de Poésie.

DRY clothes and a good breakfast soon made Richard himself again ; and it was not long before I was once more on foot, exploring the streets of Angoulême, to which I devoted the remainder of the day.

I have already descended from the city into the valley which surrounds it, and ascended the hill again without having yet said a word of the position of the town ; yet it is one of the most remarkable I ever saw. Angoulême is situated on the summit of an isolated rocky hill, at the bottom of which flow the Charente

and its small tributary, the Anguienne. For the greater part of its circumference, the sides of this eminence are all but perpendicular, and the elevation of the rock above the level of the rivers in the valleys beneath it is nearly two hundred and fifty feet. A position more remarkable for natural strength, and more easily to be rendered impregnable, it is impossible to conceive, and there can be little doubt, therefore, that so desirable a site was selected for the foundation at a very early period.

An ancient tradition, immemorially preserved among the Angoumoisins, relates, that Cæsar returning from Saintes passed not far from the conspicuous rock of Angoulême, and detached an exploring party to see whether the inhabitants of the dwellings which he perceived on the top of the rock were sufficiently important to require the staying of his army for their subjugation. On their return, the party reported that they had found nothing on the eminence but a miserable horde of robbers, living for the most part in damp and gloomy caverns hollowed out of the rock. This is scarcely a likely tradition for a people to have invented respecting their own origin; and it is worthy of remark,

moreover, that there exist to the present day a great many caverns, partly natural, and partly apparently artificial, in various parts of the rock.

The earliest author, however, who mentions Angoulême, is Ausonius, and he calls it "Iculisma." In later authors it is found written "Civitas Ecolismensium," "Ecolisma," "Equolisma," "Egolisma," "Incolisma," and in old French, "Encolisme." Several derivations have been proposed for the name—some as wild as the wildest flights of that flighty race the etymologists—but the derivation proposed from the Latin words "In collis summâ," does not seem to be very far-fetched or improbable.

Be all this as it may, the position, which was formerly valuable from the security it offered to its inhabitants is still admirable from the varied beauty of the magnificent prospects it commands over the surrounding country. With the exception of the Cour Ajot, at Brest, which looks over the splendid bay of that port, with its richly diversified shores, I know no town which possesses such delightful public walks as that of Angoulême. The entire city is nearly encircled by a series of terraces, from which a succession of extensive

views are presented to the eye, as the surprised stranger proceeds gradually from point to point in his progress around the town. On the northern and most precipitous side of the rock, the Charente flows amid a wide-spread faubourg immediately beneath the walls of the city. There is a mill, with a weir on the river, at this point; and when in the evening I again made the circuit of the town by moonlight—one of the most exquisite moonlight walks I ever enjoyed—I could hear in the deep stillness of the night the silver-toned rippling of the water, as far beneath me it dashed down its little fall, and then, soon recovering its former tranquillity, stole away swiftly and silently, detected in its course through the distant valley only here and there where the coquetting moonbeam glanced playfully but coldly for a moment upon its bosom.

To the west the view is a wider one. Far away down the broad valley of the Charente, over low-lying water-meads and undulating cornlands and vineyards, the eye careers unchecked for many a league, till in the extreme distance land and sky meet in a vague, misty line of dim haze. It is on this side that the road from Bourdeaux climbs the hill and enters

the town. It formerly ascended the extremely steep hill-side almost in a straight line, and was all but inaccessible to carriages of every sort. But the present road, though still extremely steep, has been very skilfully led up the ascent in a series of zigzags, which render the task of mounting to the town comparatively easy. Between the zigzags of the road, the hill-side has been cut into walks, and planted with lilacs, chestnuts, &c. Nothing could be conceived more delicious to look down upon from the crowning terrace which skirts the edge of the platform above. All was bloom, and verdure, and fragrance; and I thought, as I stood alternately casting my eyes over the wide extent of country in the distance, and watching a dusty diligence just arrived from the south toiling slowly and laboriously up the zigzag path amid the thickets of dark green foliage and rich lilac bloom, that I could be well content to take up my abode at Angoulême, and eat my bread butterless for the remainder of my days, for the sake of a daily walk upon its terraces.

To tell the truth, however, Angoulême, as a residence, has other inconveniences besides the want of butter, which are owing to that

same peculiarity of position to which it is indebted for its superb views. That "poor despised creature," which nobody appreciates the importance of till they have felt the want of it, water, is scarce and bad in Angoulême; and the bleak and unsheltered isolation of its lofty rock causes the air to be ordinarily so fresh and keen as to invariably aggravate and sometimes engender pulmonary complaints.

On the southern and eastern sides of the town, the character of the view is again entirely changed. The extent and smiling features of the landscape seen from the opposite side of the city are not found here. The view is shut in by some high rocky downs at no great distance, and the little valley of the Anguienne is seen for a short distance advancing into a narrow gorge between the hills.

After I had twice made the circuit of the town, I turned into the interior of it, and first found my way to the cathedral. The learned Andrew du Chesne says of this church that it was "un des plus superbes temples de toute la Guienne." But if it all merited such a description, it must have suffered sadly since his time, for it certainly cannot now be

either positively or comparatively considered a superb church. It is, however, a curious and valuable specimen of the architecture at the period of transition from the Roman to the gothic; and it is interesting to observe how very different the entire character and genius of the style is from that of the churches in northern France belonging to the period of transition from Norman to gothic. Both, indeed, are marked by the round arch, but the form of it in the Norman churches is less flat, heavy, and clumsy, and better turned. In central France, the eye seeks in vain in the early ecclesiastical architecture the aspiring, springy loftiness, the light elegance, and boldness of conception, which, despite its solidity and plainness, so remarkably characterize the architecture of that magnificently organized race of north-men, the superiority of whose genius is so forcibly imprinted on every relic of their art, and every chronicle of their deeds. In this part of France, in the specimens which remain of the transition period, before the crusades had given rise to the exquisitely magnificent and lovely forms which we conventionally call gothic, all is low, heavy, and mean.

The west front at Angoulême is rendered

curious by a great number of strange-looking little statues, some of which may be recognized as representations of the apostles and evangelists by the symbols universally appropriated to them, while many others are altogether unintelligible. Four of these figures, especially, exercise the ingenuity of the Angoumois antiquaries, some of whom declare them to represent heathen gods, or priests of Cybele, while others suppose them to be “*les images diaboliques des évêques Ariens, qui profanèrent notre église pendant toute la durée du cinquième siècle.*”

Of the interior of the church the same remarks may be made as are applicable to the exterior. It is entirely devoid of majesty or beauty, though the details of its construction are not without interest to the student of architecture. The single nave is divided transversely into three compartments, each roofed with a cupola. This mode of construction, than which it is impossible to conceive anything more calculated to destroy the effect of the length and proportions of the nave, is not found, as the learned archeologist, M. Caumont, remarks, to the north of the Loire. The church of Loches, which has been mentioned in a former chapter, is the most nor-

thern specimen of this deformity. To the south there are many other instances of it—in the cathedral churches, for example, of Cahors and Perigueux.

To the east of the cathedral are the remains of the Chapelle Saint Gelais, founded by a family of that name towards the beginning of the sixteenth century, as their burial-place. It was, says an ancient historian of the Angoumois, “autant belle et riche qu’il y en fust au royaume de France.” Its splendour has, however, entirely perished, for it never recovered the visit the Protestants paid it during the short period of their sway in Angoulême. It now serves but to commemorate a family, some particulars of whose history are characteristic of that most corrupt period which preceded and occasioned the reformation.

Octavien de Saint Gelais, for whose burial-place this chapel was more especially erected, died bishop of Angoulême in 1502. His brother, Jacques de Saint Gelais, was Bishop of Uzès, and Dean of Angoulême; and another brother, Charles de Saint Gelais, was Archdeacon of Luçon. Melin de Saint Gelais, the natural son of the Bishop of Angoulême, was the intimate companion of the boyhood of

Francis I. while he inhabited the chateau of Cognac, near Angoulême. He also afterwards became a priest.

This Melin de Saint Gelais, and his father, Octavien the bishop, were both poets; and the son more especially acquired such a reputation as to have been commonly termed the French Ovid. The father, Octavien, who was raised to the episcopacy by Pope Alexander VI., was one of the most profligate men of that very profligate period. His death, at the early age of thirty-six, is recorded to have been caused by his unrestrained debaucheries; and the poems which he has left behind him all bear the impress of the dissolute habits and degraded mind of their author. Like all libertines, he invariably speaks of women in a very contemptuous manner. Of constancy in love, this worthy bishop writes his opinions thus—

Pour être loyal à sa dame,
 Savez vous ce qu'il en advient ?
 De joyeux dolent ou devient ;
 Car point n'est de loyale femme.
 * * * * *
 * * * * *
 De trop aimer c'est grande folie
 Je le sçais bien quant à ma part, &c.

His son was such a priest as the son of such a bishop might be expected to make.

He remained in after life a favourite and companion of the worthless and libertine King Francis I., who frequently amused himself with trying what was called the "assaut de poésie," with the clerical courtier-poet. This sport consisted in one party commencing a stanza, which the other was immediately to complete, both in sense and rhyme. Thus, upon one occasion, Francis, who was on the point of getting on horseback, said to Melin de Saint Gelais,

"Petit cheval, gentil cheval,
Doux à monter, doux à descendre"

To which the poet replied, without a moment's hesitation,

"Bien que plus petit que Bucéphale
Tu portes plus grand qu'Alexandre."

For the most part, however, these jeux d'esprit were not of so innocent a description as the foregoing specimen.

Upon another occasion, Francis caught the priest by the robe as he was mounting the steps of the altar, to say mass before his royal patron, and whispered in his ear,

"L'autre jour venant de l'école
Je trouvai la dame Nicole,
Laquelle était de vert vêtue"

which the priest continued immediately in the following words :

“ Ote moi du cou cette étole,
Et si soudain je ne l’accole,
J’aurai la gageure perdue.”

He then stepped up to the altar and celebrated mass, while Francis fell back to his place, and listened to it with exemplary devotion.

Ronsard and Melin de Saint Gelais had a long and desperate quarrel, because the former maimed one of the poet’s pieces in reading it to Henry II. ; and he was not a man to quarrel with, for the pungency of his satire was so notorious that “ Gare à la tenaille de Saint Gelais ” became a proverbial mode of expression.

In the chapel de St. Gelais there was extant for many years a flaming epitaph to Octavien St. Gelais, the bishop of Angoulême, and father of the poet Melin. It was composed by his brother, the dean, and has been preserved by some of the Angoumoisian antiquaries. It is one of the tumulary inscriptions which seem to point out forcibly the propriety of selecting “ brass ” as the most appropriate medium for transmitting their monstrous falsehoods to posterity. If credit

were to be given to the fraternal eulogies which decorated Octavien's tomb, the reader would believe that the poetical prelate was all that a bishop should be ; and to those who know what the man really was, it is perfectly astonishing that his surviving brother could have *dared*, in the face of his contemporaries, to profane with such outrageous lies the sanctity of the tomb.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Angoulême—Archives of the Cathedral—Quarrel between Hugues le Brun and Bishop Montbrou—Sentence passed on the Count—Calvin at Angoulême—He is concealed by a canon of the Cathedral—Disposition of the Churchmen towards the Reformed Doctrines—Angoulême declares for the Protestants—Excesses committed by them—Tomb of Count John the Good broken open—Retribution—Battle of Jarnac—Anecdote—Death of Condé—Indignities committed by the Duc d'Anjou on his Remains—Column raised to his Memory—The Inscription—Curious coincidence—Angoulême Cathedral—The Towers—Destruction of one of them—Present condition of the remaining one—Ascent to the Top of it.

THE records of the church of Angoulême contain many notices, which prove that, even in the palmy days of church power and wealth, and lofty ecclesiastical pretensions, the rule of mother Church was not always submitted to quietly or without resistance, nor her possessions altogether secure from the vicissitudes to which all property was subject, at a period when force was necessary to keep as well as to obtain, and each man's own right

hand and stalwart arm constituted his most efficient title-deed. In the long run, however, the church was almost always victorious, and the bishop and chapter went on increasing in wealth, and the church in splendour, till the new ideas of the sixteenth century shook the power of the hierarchy to its base, and prepared the way for the more successful attack which levelled it with the ground two hundred years afterwards.

In the middle of the thirteenth century, Hugues le Brun, count of the Angoumois, had a long and obstinately-maintained quarrel with Robert de Montbron, bishop of Angoulême, respecting certain property, to which both the contending parties laid claim. The bishop found his spiritual arms not a match for the temporal weapons of the count, and was therefore obliged to invoke the assistance of the monarch, always glad to aid a bishop from whose wealth nothing for the most part was to be feared, against a feudal baron, whose power it was very often desirable to humble. The king, therefore, declared the bishops of Limoges and Cahors the judges of the quarrel; and these reverend prelates were not slow in deciding it in favour of their episcopal brother.

The sentence passed on the count in consequence of this decision is curious and characteristic. He is ordered to bring back into the town, from which they had been driven, the bishop and his clergy; and to go in procession, on the first high festival, from the monastery of St. Auzonne to the cathedral, bare-footed, in his shirt, without belt, hat, or covering of any kind upon his head. The gates of the town, by which he must pass in making this procession, are to be taken down, and burnt in the open space before the cathedral. The penitent, for such he is supposed to be, when he arrives at the church, is to make before all the people a confession of his sins, more especially of that of having withstood the bishop, and he is to promise never to be guilty of the like again. He is, moreover, condemned to a fine of five livres, and to found an endowment sufficient to supply three wax candles to burn before the high altar of the cathedral of Angoulême for ever.

The award of the judges is dated on St. Clement's day, the 23rd of November, 1259, and is recorded by Corlieu, the author of an old history of the counts of the Angoumois.

The time was, however, soon to come, when the church's victories were to be less easily

obtained, and her battles to be of a more dangerous description. It was in the second quarter of the sixteenth century that Francis I. began to persecute the professors of the new doctrines, to whose enthusiasm the extreme corruption of his court had given an additional impulse. And it was about that time that a young man, of some twenty-five years of age, flying from the pursuit of those who were employed to hunt down the reformists, arrived one night at Angoulême, and succeeded in finding the concealment which he sought in the house of one Louis Dutillet, one of the canons of the cathedral.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that the Catholic clergy were unanimous in their opposition to the reformed doctrines. Bad and corrupt as the church was, the ecclesiastics were by very far the best educated body of the time, and in all probability contained among their numbers a greater proportion of virtuous and single-minded men, anxious for the truth, and capable of recognizing it, than any other class of society. Many members of the clergy, accordingly, openly espoused the cause of the new doctrines; and a still greater number, gifted with intellects capable of bursting the bonds

of educational and professional prejudices, and with sincere and pious hearts, but not with the martyr's nerve of iron, secretly wished well to them.

Louis Dutillet was one of the former class, and, though a canon of the cathedral, he sheltered in his house from immediate pursuit the youthful reformer, who at so early an age had not feared to draw down upon him the resentment of the church, and the persecution of the civil authorities. The stranger did not look like one whom tyrant force would be likely to bend, whose convictions could be biassed by interest, or whose voice stilled by fear. A physiognomist, who had looked on his high and broad forehead, his deep-set, active, and keen eye, and severe, resolute mouth, would have deemed him formed by nature in the true martyr's mould.

The heat of pursuit having passed off, the young enthusiast ventured to shew himself in the town; and he remained at Angoulême three years, during which time his ostensible employment was teaching the Greek language. He called himself Déparcan; and the authorities of the town supposed him to be a poor scholar, whose whole time was occupied and energies employed on the laborious

profession by which he earned his bread. But when the reader is told that this poor scholar was no other than the youthful Calvin, he will easily imagine that the time of his abode in the city of Angoulême was employed in other matters than the teaching of Greek, and was attended with far more important results than the presence among the citizens of any other one human being would have been likely to produce.

It is believed that he composed during those years his *Christian Institute*. But neither did this labour entirely occupy his active mind and indefatigable spirit. The seeds which he then found the means to scatter widely in fertile soils were not long in coming to maturity, and a few years later produced fruits, which the sower, enthusiastic and violent-minded as he was, must have deplored.

When the kingdom became openly divided into two factions under Charles IX., Angoulême declared itself for the Protestants. The Comte de la Rochefoucauld-Marthon, governor of the province, was ordered by the Duc de Guise to make himself master of the chateau; but he was driven from the town by Jean Ponte, the mayor, and the citizens. The city then remained in the possession of the

Protestants, who, in the excess of their triumph, and stimulated as much by their hatred as citizens against the nobles as by intemperate zeal for the reformed religion, were guilty of every species of excess and outrage.

They laid waste the cathedral and other churches, broke the doors, overturned the altars and statues, stole all the vessels and ornaments of precious metal, and burned the deeds and charters of the ecclesiastical corporations. Sepulchres were profaned, the remains of the dead scattered to the winds, and many citizens known to be attached to the old religion were put to death in cold blood. The magnificent mausoleum of Count John the Good, which was the pride of the cathedral, and an object of much veneration to the populace, was destroyed, and the leaden coffin which inclosed the body was broken open. The corpse was found entire; and a sacrilegious ruffian, named Ruffier, who was one of those engaged in breaking open the coffin, struck his knife several times into the body as soon as it was exposed to view. Others cut off the head; and they were about to burn the carcass, but were prevented by some of the less furious of their party. The coffin was melted down into bullets.

But the day of retribution was not far distant, and the battle of Jarnac, so fatal to the Protestants from the loss of their great captain, the valiant and chivalric Condé, was at hand to avenge the barbarities committed in their hour of triumph.

Jarnac is a small place on the Charente, a few leagues to the westward of Angoulême ; and it was on the plains to the east of the town, in the immediate neighbourhood of the villages of Triac and Bassac, that, on the 13th of March, in the year 1569, the memorable battle took place, which inflicted so serious a blow on the reformed party. Coligny had the chief command of the Protestants, and the Duc d'Anjou, afterwards Henry III., that of the Catholic army. Coligny seems on this occasion to have been decidedly out-generaled and duped by a well-managed feint on the part of the Catholics, who contrived to pass a brook which divided the two armies during the night, and were at sunrise ranged in battle array, and ready for immediate action, while the Protestant troops were still divided into several bodies stationed at different points. Three hours would have been requisite for their concentration. Coligny perceived his error, and would have fallen back

upon Jarnac, where Condé still was with a body of six thousand infantry. But the enemy gave him no time to execute such a movement.

At the first dawn of day the entire Catholic army knelt in prayer to the giver of all victory, and besought his blessing and aid in the pious work of massacring their heretic fellow-creatures and fellow-countrymen. "Ainsi commença," says a provincial historian, in his detailed account of this sanguinary day, "par un acte de religion, une journée de massacre et de haine, et dont la fin devait voir un lâche assassinat."

Coligny soon found himself unable to stand the attack of the overpowering force opposed to him, and despatched a message to Condé to bring up his division with all speed. And here Coligny made another great mistake; for, in his impatience, and in the urgency of the occasion, he himself galloped off to hasten the prince's movements. And there can be little doubt that his momentary absence from the field did much towards assuring the victory of the Catholics.

Condé was, however, soon on the field, with four hundred gentlemen, leaving the main body of his troops to follow him. He had his

arm in a sling, from the consequences of a recent fall ; and, as if fate had determined on combining every species of mishap to crush him, as he was arranging his little squadron for an impetuous charge, the horse of the Comte de la Rochefoucauld kicked him, and broke his leg. Without suffering the agony occasioned by this most disastrous accident to impede him for an instant in the business of the moment, he merely said, in a composed voice, “ Vous voyez combien un cheval fougueux est dangereux un jour de bataille ! ” and immediately charged at the head of his little band into the thickest of the enemies’ forces. Coligny was too actively engaged in another part of the field to be able to bring him any assistance, but he expected every moment to be supported by the arrival of the six thousand infantry from Jarnac.

The impetuosity of his charge had carried him into the midst of the enemies’ ranks, which closed round him and his gallant band on all sides ; and minute after minute elapsed—minutes which were worth in importance, and which almost seemed, years to the isolated knot, whose position was now desperate—and the troops from Jarnac came not. At last,

Condé's horse was killed under him. He was of course unable to rise ; but he still maintained a fight, supported by one knee on the ground. It was at that moment that was done a deed of heroism and devotion which both D'Aubigné and De Thou have commemorated. An old Protestant gentleman, named Lavergne de Tressan, who was fighting amid twenty-five youths, all his sons and nephews, seeing the desperate condition of his leader, rushed towards him with his kinsmen, and protected him with their bodies, till the old man and fifteen of his family lay dead around him.

Condé still breathed ; but mutilated, exhausted, and bleeding from a score of wounds, he was unable to strike another blow for his own defence, or for the cause for which he fought. So, chancing at that moment to perceive among the Catholic ranks an individual named D'Argence, who had formerly been his friend, and had served under him, he called to him, and, lifting his vizor, delivered up to him his sword. D'Argence received it with respect, raised him, extricated him from the *melée*, and placed him under a tree, where he proceeded to bind his wounds.

But the Duke of Anjou had given general orders that morning, immediately after he

had risen from joining with the army in prayer, that the prince should be put to death if possible. And while D'Argence, in humane disobedience to this order, was endeavouring to give the captured hero what assistance he could, Montesquieu, the captain of the duke of Anjou's Swiss guards, ran up, and exclaiming "Kill him! kill him!" struck the disabled and totally helpless prince a blow on the head with the butt-end of his pistol, which put an end to his existence.

But the hatred of the ignoble and cowardly-minded Henry of Anjou was not satiated with the death of his enemy. He exposed the mutilated limbs of that body, from which so gallant a spirit had just passed, to every insult and indignity which his soldiers could devise; and placing the mangled form in derision upon an ass, carried it, amid the hooting of the soldiery, in that manner to Jarnac, where at midnight he finished the sanguinary day's work with a repetition of the revolting mockery with which he had commenced it, by causing a *Te Deum* to be sung.

The following doggrel verses were made on the subject of the duke of Anjou's horrible vengeance, and still serve to keep alive the

memory of it among the peasants of the Angoumois.

“ L’an mil cinq cent soixante-neuf
Entre Jarnac et Chateau-neuf,
Fut porté mort sur une ânesse,
Le grand ennemi de la messe.”

Many years afterwards a column was raised on the spot where Condé was murdered by the ruffian Montesquieu, with the following inscription.

HIC
INFANDA NECE OCCUBUIT
ANNO M.D. LXIX.
ÆTATIS XXXIX.
LUDOVICUS BORBONIUS CONDÆUS
QUI
IN OMNIBUS BELLII PACISQUE ARTIBUS
NULLI SECUNDUS
VIRTUTE, INGENIO, SOLERTIA
NATALIUM SPLENDOREM
ÆQUAVIT
VIR
MELIORE EXITU
DIGNUS.

The column still exists on the road side between Triac and Bassac ; but the inscription has been destroyed. “ Nos modernes Vandales,” says M. Marvaud, an Angoumoisin writer, in speaking of the fate of this inscription, “ ne respectent plus les monuments du passé ; on dirait qu’ils rougissent de la gloire de nos pères, et qu’ils croient effacer tous les souvenirs des grandes actions,

et des nobles infortunes. Encore quelques jours donnés à cette soif de destruction, et il ne restera plus de traces des générations qui nous ont précédés La France, moins heureuse que la Grèce, même asservie, n'aura pas de débris pour l'histoire et de leçons monumentales !”

The young Henry of Navarre, then only thirteen years of age, was present at the battle of Jarnac ; and historians have noticed as a remarkable coincidence, that the three princes of the blood royal, who on that day made theological disputes a pretext for bloodshed, whose real cause was their personal antipathies and rival ambitions, were all three destined to perish by violent deaths at the hands of assassins, stimulated by the fanaticism of theological hate. The death of Condé we have just seen. The Duke of Anjou, when he had ascended the throne as Henry III., was assassinated by a monk ; and Henry IV. met with a similar fate from the unrelenting intolerance of Romanism at the hands of an Angoumois fanatic.

The cathedral at Angoulême to the present day exhibits traces of the ravages committed by the Protestants during their short period of power. Both the transepts had formerly

a tower at their extremity. That to the north is still remaining; but the much more lofty one which surmounted the southern transept, and which old Duchesne says was "l'une des plus hautes tours et aiguilles de France," was destroyed by them in 1568. The remaining tower seemed to be in a very dilapidated condition, and exhibited signs of great antiquity. It is surmounted, as are very many towers of the period of the transition from Roman to gothic, by a four-sided pyramidal roof, which makes it impossible to get on the top of it. But, as I was anxious to see the view which a tower built on such a remarkably elevated position must command, I managed with some difficulty to clamber up to the open arches with which the tower is pierced on all its four sides, immediately below the roof. This was not altogether an easy matter. The whole tower above the roof of the church is entirely empty, with the exception of several apparently half rotten beams which traverse it in various directions, and it possesses no sort of stair whatsoever; so that the only means of ascent was by placing, with the assistance of the old bellringer, a rickety, rotten ladder, which seemed as ancient as the edifice itself, from

one beam to another, till the top was thus reached by stages, each more difficult to accomplish than the last.

The old bellringer accompanied me in my ascent as far as the clock, which was about half way to the top. He had frequently mounted thus far in the course of his avocations as guardian and regulator of the clock. But into the unexplored region above this he declined to push his researches — contenting himself with gazing thence at my upward progress, and assuring me that there was “*pas de danger, et rien a craindre.*” He was very deaf, moreover, and this prevented me from availing myself, as I might otherwise have done, of his experience and advice.

“*Et l’échelle! Est ce que je puis m’y confier. Elle a l’air de n’être pas trop solide!*” quoth I.

“*Oui! oui! la tour est encore bien solide!*” responded he; and with this encouragement I was obliged to pursue my difficult climbing.

I am not altogether unpractised at such work; but the ascent of the cathedral tower at Angoulême was decidedly the most ticklish achievement of the kind I ever accomplished; and when at length I reached the top, and had with much difficulty perched myself in

one of the arches, in the thickness of the wall, I found, to my disappointment and discomfiture, that the expected view over the country below was not an inch more extensive than that from the terrace around the town.

The descent, as in such circumstances is always the case, was still more difficult to accomplish than the climbing up; and when I once more stood with neck, legs, and arms, sound upon terra firma — *le plancher des vaches*," as the French say—I congratulated myself not a little on the safe termination of my enterprize.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Moonlight Ramble—Walk round the Terraces of the Town—Visit to St. Cybard's Grotto — Difficulty of reaching it—Adventure—Beggar's Hostelry—Host—Patois of the Angoumois—Specimen of this Dialect—St. Cybard's Dwelling—Religion of the Angoumoisins — Inscription over the Door of the Saint's Grotto — Monastery—Return to Quarters.

It was nearly ten o'clock when I left a little café to which I had betaken myself in the evening to look at the news, drink my coffee, and see what papers the Angoumoisins preferred, and I intended to have gone straight-way home to my inn to bed ; but it was such a lovely night, the moon was so brilliant, and the sky so clear, that I could not resist the temptation of another walk round the town, upon the magnificent terraces which constitute its chief ornament. The city was already quite quiet, and I only met one single individual in making the whole tour of the town. I never enjoyed a moonlight walk more ; and when the circuit of the terraces was com-

pleted, I felt so little inclined to go to bed that I determined to attempt paying a visit to the grotto of St. Cybard, one of the lions of Angoulême, which I had not found time during the day to pay my respects to.

I knew that this grotto was situated somewhere in the rocks immediately beneath the city walls, on the northern side of the town, but had no very accurate idea of its locality, or of the means of reaching it. For some time I wandered along the terrace above the rocks which I knew contained the object of my search, without being able to find any means of descending them; and to have passed out of the town by any one of the regular roads would have caused me to make a large circuit before I could have got back to the base of the rocks. At last I found a place in the town wall which runs along the edge of the platform, not above breast high, where there were evident traces of its having been frequently passed over, and below I thought I saw in the uncertain light something like a little path running among the bushes which grew on the hill-side immediately at the foot of the precipice.

The wall was easily surmounted, and the descent I found had been rendered very prac-

licable. But it was necessary to move with caution; for nothing can be more puzzling and deceptive than the unsteady and capricious smiles of the lady moon, as she flings the flickering light of her countenance over tree, rock, and hill, and changes to all eyes but those of her own minions the relative distances and ordinary proportions and bearings of places and things. I reached the bottom, however, in safety, and then found that my eyes had not deceived me, and there was in fact a little path under the cliff, which I doubted not would conduct me to the saint's former dwelling.

So I made my way along this, not without a sufficient quantum of slips and stumbles, till I came to a door in the rock from which a light was streaming. I thought that this must without doubt be the grotto, and that the saint had company. I attempted to push the door open, but it was fastened within, and I heard the sound of several voices. My nocturnal visit to St. Cybard's grotto began to assume quite the air of an adventure, and I wondered not a little what could be going on within the saint's dwelling. That a solitary devotee should have been there, and have lighted his votive taper before the now

neglected shrine, would not have surprised me ; but it seemed passing strange that the holy man should receive so noisy and so large an assembly as the sounds I heard evidently proceeded from.

So I knocked at the door stoutly with my stick, and in another minute I found myself in the midst of one of the strangest scenes I ever witnessed. It was a very large cavern, extending horizontally into the side of the rock to the depth of I should think from forty to fifty feet. The roof was low and flat, and although nature had evidently been the first and principal architect of the wide apartment, it was clear that man's labour had been added to fit it for the purposes of a dwelling.

At the farther end was a large wood fire, which was the principal means of lighting the sombre-looking cavern ; and though a variety of fissures in the rock allowed the greater portion of the smoke to escape through the roof, the whole space was filled with a dense cloud which rendered the different objects enveloped in it but dimly distinguishable. Some moments, therefore, elapsed before I was able to estimate accurately the appearance and character of the inmates of the

place. Gradually, however, I perceived spread all round the sides of the huge vault a thick bed of dry leaves and fern boughs, on which were reclining in every variety of posture a considerable number of figures of both sexes and all ages. Some were nearly naked, and some were clothed in many-tinted tatters; some were sleeping, some eating and drinking, and some laughing and chattering. It required but small penetration to perceive that I had intruded into a sort of beggar's caravanserai, and that the motley crew of the halt, the lame, and the blind, around me, together with some sufficiently strapping and able-bodied specimens of male and female humanity, were neither more nor less than an assemblage of all the vagabonds and mendicants who intended to exercise their profession in Angoulême and its neighbourhood the next day.

In the mean time, while I was making these observations, the old man who had opened the door to me, and who appeared to be the landlord of this subterranean place of entertainment, continued gazing at me with some surprise, and waiting for me to explain the reasons of my presence there. He was a little, shrivelled, hunchbacked, anatomy of a crea-

ture, with an immense head, long beard, and disproportionately long arms, and looked more like a desiccated mummy of a baboon than any thing human. The other inmates of the cave seemed to pay very little attention to the new comer. Some stared a little, but the greater number continued their eating, talking, or sleeping, without taking any notice of me.

I still conceived that this must be St. Cybard's cave, though it seemed put to a very different purpose from its original one. But in this I found that I was mistaken. There are, it seems, a great many natural caverns in the rocks beneath this part of the town, and the saint's dwelling was a few yards further on.

It was not without great difficulty that I made the old man understand what I wanted, or could in my turn comprehend his reply. He could speak nothing but the Angoumois patois—and this is one of the most barbarous and unintelligible in France. The little province of the Angoumois was situated on the ancient limit which separated the Langue d'oc from the Langue d'oil, and the dialect of the country was a most unintelligible mixture of both these languages. It has at the pre-

sent day very much fallen into disuse, even among the peasants, but still continues in certain communes, more especially in the arrondissement of Confolens, to be the only language of the agricultural labourers.

To give the reader an idea of the extraordinary jargon produced by the curious mixture of the two ancient tongues, which divided France between them, I will transcribe in Angoumois patois the commencement of the well-known fable of “ La Laitière et le pot au lait.”

Peyrouno pourtav' au marcha
 Un toupi dé la sur so tête;
 Sur un piti couessi, lo l'ovio bien jucha,
 Greissa dit qu'au l'ier eytocha.
 Billado coum un jour de fête
 Réveillado coum un en-sau
 Légêro coum un parpoillau
 Pu lesto qu'un chat-eyeurau,
 No propo jupo de saumiêro
 Rétroussado dis so gotiêro,
 Chaussad-én souilles plats, per ne pas tan riscas
 Ni d'entorço, ni de faü pas,” &c.

It is not surprising that I could not understand very readily the old gentleman, who confined himself to this somewhat Spanish-sounding dialect. And, had it not been that we had one word in common to both of us, viz., the name of the saint whose dwelling I wished to visit, our attempts at inter-com-

muning would have been utterly fruitless. The name of St. Cybard, however, was mutually intelligible, the more so as the saint's appellation seems to have been modified to suit the ears and pronounciation of the Angoumois peasantry, his original and proper name having been Eparchus. The production of a half franc piece proved equally comprehensible; and the old man proceeded to light a sort of torch twisted up of dried fern leaves, to shew me the holy man's former abode.

It was not many paces from his own dwelling, and was a very similar cave, originally constructed by nature, and enlarged afterwards considerably by labour. It was much smaller than it is now when the saint dwelt in it for forty years, and then died there. For the place became miraculous from the long presence of so much sanctity; and bands of pilgrims from all parts of the Angoumois and the neighbouring provinces thronged in such numbers to the anchorite's holy cave, that Pericard, bishop of Angoulême, enlarged the cavern, put up an altar in it, which still remains, and consecrated it as a chapel. Until the revolution, mass was still occasionally performed there. The following inscrip-

tion, cut in the rock over the doorway, still commemorates the life and death of the saint, and the subsequent fortunes of his dwelling, now visited only rarely by some curious stranger ; for the inhabitants of the Angoumois have the reputation of having outgrown all their old-world religious notions and superstitions more than most of the peasantry to the south of the Loire.

The memorial runs as follows :

DEO. OPT. MAX.
 VOX DOMINI CONCUITENTIS
 DESERTUM INTER CONDENSE
 CELLAM REVELAVIT.
 SICUT PASSER INVENIENS SIBI
 DOMUM, ET TURTUR NIDUM
 EPARCHIUS HABITAVIT.
 IN LOCO HONORIS SEPTENARIUS
 CÆNOBITARUM CÆTUS
 SACELLUM ÆDIFICAVIT.
 PETRAM REFUGIUM HERINACHUS
 REFUGIUM CHRISTICOLIS.
 REFUGIUS EXORNAVIT.
 STANS IN MEDIO FRATRUM
 FUNDENSQUE OLEUM DESUPER
 PERICARDIUS CONSECRAVIT.
 XII KAL. SEPT. ANNO
 DOMINI MDCLXXV.

And a little lower down on the stone are cut the words—

OBIIT EPARCHUS ANNO DNI DLXXXIII.
 ÆTATIS SUÆ LXXX
 RECLUSIONIS XL.

A monastery was endowed and built in

after-times in honour of the saint's dwelling, as the inscription intimates ; it was situated on the hill-side, which slopes from the base of the rocks, in which the cave is, down to the Charente. But not a vestige of it remains ; and its site is occupied by gardens, whose produce supplies the markets of the city.

The light of the moon was nearly gone when I began to think of my return to the town ; so, not caring to retrace in the dark the somewhat difficult path by which I had reached the grotto, I descended to the river across these gardens, and remounted the hill, after making a considerable circle by the high road from Jarnac.

My nocturnal excursion had turned out a good deal longer than I had anticipated when I started ; and, by the time I reached the inn, it was considerably later than a prudent traveller would wish his hour of rest to be, who has to be afoot at five in the morning.

The town was as silent as a city of the dead as I passed through it. Watchmen seemed to be things unknown ; and it seems as if lighting the street was deemed almost as unnecessary. One or two miserable little oil lamps, suspended across the streets as at Paris, dimly twinkled here and there—as few

and far between as angels' visits—and looked as if they were intended to warn the unwary that the passage was stopped by the rope which supported them, rather than to illuminate the city.

CHAPTER XLV.

Visit to Ruelle—Government Foundry — Process of boring cannon — Blast Furnaces — Casting a Cannon — Journey to La Rochefoucauld—River Bandià — Chateau of the Ducs de la Rochefoucauld — Its present condition — Ancient Donjon Tower — Vaults beneath the Castle—Superstitions concerning them — Anecdotes of the Family de la Rochefoucauld — Walk to the Grottes de Rencogne — The Miller of Rencogne — Cross Questions and Crooked Answers—Visit to the Caverns — Their Nature and Appearance — Mysterious Circumstance — Departure for Limoges.

NOTWITHSTANDING the late hour at which I reached my bed after my moonlight pilgrimage to St. Cybard's shrine, I started before five the next morning to walk to Ruelle, a village about four miles to the north-east of Angoulême, where the French government have a very extensive cannon-foundry. It is situated on the little river Touvre, and on the highroad to La Rochefoucauld and Limoges, in the midst of chalky hills, covered for the most part with vines, whose produce is destined to be converted into Cognac brandy.

No objection was made to my entering the

government premises, and wandering freely and uncontrolled by the nuisance of a conductor over all the different workshops and smelting-houses. The whole establishment was in very active operation, and I was told that ordinarily a new cannon was cast every day. They were engaged on some of the largest description at the time of my visit, and I determined to remain till the stated moment when the metal should be ready to run from the furnace, for the purpose of witnessing the operation of casting.

In the mean time, I amused myself with watching the process of boring. The cannon, as the reader is probably aware, are cast in a solid mass, and the hole is bored when the metal is cold. This operation is performed in a long, narrow building, in which about fifteen or twenty cannon lie side by side, suspended in huge timber frames, pointing their as yet solid muzzles towards as many huge augers. These instruments, formed of the very best and most carefully hardened steel, are themselves stationary, while the ponderous monsters, whose solid bulk they are to penetrate, revolve slowly by the application of a water-power, and by the same action, through the intervention of a screw, advance in due

proportion to oppose fresh portions of their substance to the well-oiled auger. Beneath, immense heaps of iron filings attest the great quantity of the metal removed.

The huge blast furnaces were next to be visited. All the power required in this department, also, for lifting the masses of metal, working the blast tubes, &c., is water power. No steam is used in any part of the establishment. No other fuel is used in the smelting besides charcoal, which is furnished to any amount required from large forests belonging to the crown, about a league distant between Ruelle and La Rochefoucauld. The ore is brought from mines, six or eight leagues distant, in the department of La Dordogne; and the castine, or flux, is furnished by the neighbouring hills. All the requisites for the smelting of ore, and the production of iron, are thus near at hand; but Ruelle has the disadvantage of being unapproachable by water carriage, and the ore has to be brought, and the cannon carried away, by waggons.

I had to wait some hours before the grand moment of the day—the casting of one of the mighty monsters destined to control the fate and fortunes of nations. The mould of sand, most carefully and accurately prepared, was

at length ready. The superior artist had scanned with scrutinizing eye every part of it, slightly altering the contour of a curve here, and sharpening an angle there; and the frame containing it was sunk into a pit in front of the furnace mouth, about six feet from the opening of it. This space of six feet was occupied by a deep bed of fine sand, through which a little canal about a foot wide, and as much in depth, was cut for the passage of the metal.

Two brawny, bare-armed giants then placed themselves, one on each side of the furnace-door, with each a huge crowbar in his hand. Two others were stationed on either side of the canal through the sand, with machines like little hatches fixed to the end of long poles to shut off the molten stream at pleasure; and a fifth man took his place close to the mould. His duty was by far the most arduous. It consisted in constantly, during the operation of casting, sweeping back with a sort of rake all the scum and dross from the surface of the white hot torrent, at the moment of its precipitating itself into the mould. The heat and glare to which the performer of this duty must be exposed, must necessarily be tremendous; and every kind of

precaution is taken to protect him from it as far as possible. A very tall and fine-looking old man stepped up to his post to perform this task. He wore on his white head a very broad-brimmed hat, so large in the brim as to cover his face entirely by bending forward his head. A large pair of gaiters, coated with tin plates, encased his legs, and the whole of the rest of his costume, which was of woollen, was soaked with water. Another man stood by him with a sort of shield to hold before him, by means of a long pole, as occasion should offer; and water was at hand to throw over him if requisite.

When all these were in their places, and every thing was ready, a superintendent was called from his house on the premises to be present at the casting, and on his arrival the word was given to open the furnace. This was done by two or three vigorous blows of the two crowbar carriers against the wall formed of a sort of mortar, prepared expressly for the purpose, by which the furnace is closed. Forth rushed the glowing stream, hissing with a sort of subdued crackling sound, throwing off innumerable sparks, and sending forth such a sirocco blast of heat and glare of red light, that, though at a much greater distance

than the principal actors in the scene, I mechanically turned away my face from it, and retreated to a more respectful distance.

It took, I should think, nearly five minutes to fill the mould ; and I shall never forget the strange and picturesque appearance of the men, especially of the old foreman, as the fierce glare played upon his gaunt, spare figure, long, haggard face, and the grey locks which, long and grisly, escaped from beneath his huge hat. As I felt the heated air scorching my face at a distance of some yards, it was difficult to conceive how he was able to endure, hanging over it as he was, the heat and glare of the metal as it blazed forth from the mould immediately beneath him, as if it were enraged to find itself confined within its narrow prison of sand. But the old man stood firm, plying his rake the whole time, as the fiery torrent fell with a dull wobbling blob-blob-blob into the mould, till at length the liquid metal reached the top, and the two attendants cut off the stream with their iron hatches ; and one more instrument of death and destruction was added to the number already existing for the benefit, advantage, and glory of mankind.

I left Ruelle by a little "voiture commis-

sionaire" which passed through the village in the afternoon on its way to La Rochefoucauld, intending to sleep and pass the greatest part of the next day there. The country through which the road passes is, during the first part of the journey, a succession of hills of light chalky soil. Further on, to the north-east, there is a good deal of forest, and here and there masses of limestone rock pierce through the soil. Towards La Rochefoucauld the style of scenery is more picturesque; and in the immediate neighbourhood of the little river Bandia, whose flat-bottomed valley of green meadows, broken here and there by grey rocks, which rise in isolated masses above the sod, and shallow stream we crossed at a spot called the Pont de Becasse, the materials for more than one pretty sketch might be found.

Not far from the Pont de Becasse, this little river, the Bandia, offers to the naturalist a rather singular phenomenon. Unless when the water is very high, the stream suddenly disappears amid a mass of loose rocks in the middle of its bed, and leaves the lower part of the channel, which it fills when the water is abundant, quite dry. It is remarkable that several other of the small streams in the

neighbourhood of La Rochefoucauld are subject to similar irregularities; and it is conjectured that there exist some large subterranean reservoirs, which is in some degree evidenced by the circumstance of another neighbouring river, the Touvre, rising suddenly from a hole at the foot of a hill, like the Loiret, near Orleans, in sufficient abundance to carry a boat from its source. There is another similar spring from which a large quantity of water wells forth, and falls into the Touvre, which a tradition of the country states to have suddenly burst forth at the time of the great earthquake at Lisbon. The shock of an earthquake was very perceptibly felt at Angoulême on the night of the twenty-first of September, in the year 1817.

La Rochefoucauld, a quiet little town of from two to three thousand inhabitants, has nothing remarkable about it but its ancient chateau, the possession and residence formerly of the celebrated François Duc de la Rochefoucauld, the historian of the wars of the Fronde, and author of the more generally known "maxims." This lordship, which was erected into a duchy by Louis XIII., in 1622, is found mentioned in very ancient titles under the appellation of "Rupes Fucaldi,"

and it is now one of the very few seignories which could be named in France that have always, from time immemorial, belonged to the same family.

The ancient chateau escaped almost unharmed at the revolution ; and an old man of the place, with whom I talked of the castle and its former lords, told me, in answer to my inquiries how so lordly and aristocratic an old residence chanced to fare so much better than the generality of its fellows, that it was because the then duke was a very popular man with the people, “*qui toujours se plaisait à dire au peuple qu’ il était fort juste que toutes les grandes terres seraient confisquées, et tous les chateaux abimés excepté le sien, vous entendez.*”

Whether this was in any degree true of the lord of La Rochefoucauld of that day, I know not ; but could a better or more pertinent character of a demagogue have been conceived or described ?

The chateau of this ancient family is picturesquely situated on a rock, beneath which flows the river Tardouère. The little town lies almost entirely on the other side of the stream, and communicated with its feudal lord and protector by a long, narrow, and

very ancient bridge. The rock shows towards the river and town a precipitous face of considerable height, and a fine terrace, paved with flagstone, and surrounded by a heavy stone balustrade in the renaissance style, on which the windows of some of the best apartments open, runs along the top of it. The rising ground behind the chateau is covered with fine wood, above which rises the tall, square donjon tower of the chateau, the only remaining portion of a castle which existed on this rock before the building of the present residence.

The chateau is not inhabited by the present duke, though he occasionally visits it. Indeed, it is not habitable, or in a condition to be made so without a very great outlay. The rooms are entirely dismantled and very much dilapidated; and the inscriptions "Ecole communale," "Ecole normale," &c., which may still be seen over the doors of one wing of the building, indicate the uses to which it was applied during the revolution, and seem in a great degree to contradict the insinuations of my garrulous friend above quoted.

The present chateau, with the exception of the donjon tower, was begun and finished during the reign of Francis I., and is a good

specimen of the rich and florid domestic architecture of that period. The great staircase seems always to have been a grand object with the architects of that day, and a portion of the building on which they put forth all their skill and lavished the greatest profusion of ornament ; and at La Rochefoucauld, accordingly, the staircase is still the feature most vaunted by the Angoumois antiquarians and topographers, and most worthy of a visitor's attention. The building forms three sides of a square, the open side being towards the town ; and around the interior of two of the three sides there run corridors, open on one side, which are another frequently recurring feature in the buildings of the time of Francis I. These also, at La Rochefoucauld, are profusely ornamented with elaborately-carved stonework.

The old donjon is in a sad state of dilapidation. The floors are rotten, and have in a great measure disappeared, and even the thick and sturdy walls give sundry ominous tokens of a tendency to dissolution. The present owner has, however, endeavoured to preserve from total ruin this ancient monument of the power and dignity of his ancestors, at the time when their names appear on

almost every page of the provincial history of this part of France, as the first vassals of the powerful counts of Angoulême. He has put a new roof on the old walls, and has, as far as might be, strengthened them with strong cramps, and restored them to the perpendicular by drawing them together with transversal bars of iron.

The part of the castle, however, which most interested me, if they can be said to be such, were the immense vaults beneath it. These vast caverns in the rock, on which the castle stands, are entirely the work of nature. Along the course of the Tardouère, and that of the Bandia, there are a great number of similar natural excavations, which combine with the phenomena, already spoken of, which these streams exhibit, to prove that the whole of this region has been convulsed by volcanic action. I know not whether the extent of the caverns beneath La Rochefoucauld was ascertained by the inmates of the castle in the days when it was inhabited; but it is at all events many years since they have been explored entirely, and the present generation of "Rufucaldians" have abundance of strange tales and traditionary lore to tell about them, but can give no exact infor-

mation respecting their extent, outlets, or condition.

They are reached by the stairs, which descend to the quondam dungeons, and more recently cellars of the castle. From these another flight of stairs descends, and then the vast caverns branch off in long passages, sometimes high, sometimes low, in all directions. I was extremely curious to explore these curious vaults of nature's building, but could get no assistance from the people in doing so. The old woman and her daughter, who acted as concierges of the chateau, made all sorts of excuses to avoid conducting me to them. It was too late. There was no time. They had no candles. "On n'entre pas dans ces lieux là." At last they confessed that they were afraid to go down the second flight of steps. They did not know the way . . . they should lose themselves . . . and never come out any more . . . and then there were such very strange things said "de ces souterrains là."

They were equally unwilling to furnish me with a candle to go by myself, urging that they should be blamed by the duke if a man was lost in his cellars! I was, therefore, obliged to content myself with such a view of

these dreaded vaults as could be obtained by the means of the dim ray of light which struggled down the stair leading to them from the regions above. The cellars have daylight admitted into them from the face of the rock.

During the wars of religion which raged with so much violence over the whole of the Angoumois, it should seem that the family of La Rochefoucauld were, like many others, divided in their sentiments, and embraced opposite sides; for we find one La Rochefoucauld an earnest Catholic, governor of the town of Angoulême for the king, and another in the army of Condé. It is recorded, also, that these vast caverns served often as hiding-places for the persecuted and hunted Huguenots; so that the head of the family must have espoused the cause of reform.

At a subsequent period, during the troubles of the Fronde, "cette nouvelle ligue, conduite," says a French historian, "par quelques femmes, dont la beauté trafiquait des intérêts de la nation," the Duc de la Rochefoucauld was a most active partizan in the Angoumois. The historian alludes particularly to the Duchesses de Longueville and de Bouillon; and certainly, as far as the patriotism of that zealous frondeur, the Duc

de la Rochefoucauld, was concerned, the historian is justified in his denunciation by the confession of the duke himself, who tells us, speaking of the Duchess de Longueville, in the words of the poet Durier,

Pour mériter son cœur, pour plaire à ses beaux yeux,
J'ai fait la guerre aux Rois; je l'aurais faite aux Dieux.

Bidding adieu to the tower and caverns of La Rochefoucauld, I set out upon a little excursion to the "Grottes de Rencogne," a series of caverns of a similar description to those beneath the chateau, which are found in the rocks which bound the course of the Tardouère a few miles higher up the stream. I had a pleasant, pretty walk, though the weather was of the hottest, and at the end of two or three miles came in sight of the village of Rencogne, perched high on the top of the precipitous though shrub-covered rock, in which the caverns exist. The little village church, on its elevated platform, the green woody side of the high bank of rock, its verdure diversified and relieved by the grey remains of an ancient castle which once stood niched among the cliffs, but has long since perished so utterly that its few remaining masses of masonry are scarcely distinguishable from fragments of rock, together with

the river flowing at the base of the precipice, and the picturesque buildings of a mill turned by its waters, make the elements of a very pretty landscape, which would require but little assistance from the invention or arranging skill of the artist to render it a perfect composition.

I had been told at La Rochefoucauld that the miller of this mill generally did the honours of the caverns to visitors whose curiosity led them to go to see them; and to him I made application, accordingly, for lights and a guide to conduct me into their recesses. While his son, a lad of sixteen or seventeen, was preparing to go with me, the miller, who appeared to be exceedingly proud of his mill, which had recently been fitted with new works, entered into conversation with me. I was more inclined to talk of the caverns than of millwrights' works; and, thinking only of my own objects, answered to his inquiry whether I had ever seen such a thing before, "No! never! for they tell me that it is by far larger than that at La Rochefoucauld."

"Oh! there is no comparison!" said the miller, talking of his mill; "and as you have nothing of the sort in your country, you are

fortunate in having an opportunity of seeing this."

"Yes," said I, "I am glad to have come here. Is it necessary to take off one's shoes and stockings, to avoid wetting them?"

"Comment! sacré matin! pas du tout!" said the jolly miller, rather angry at the supposed affront to his mill. "It is always just as dry and clean as you see it here."

"A la bonne heure!" rejoined I. "Mais cependant il y a toujours de l'eau, n'est ce pas?"

"Oui! oui! toujours! toujours!" cried my friend, in an exulting, self-congratulatory sort of manner which I could not comprehend; "l'eau ne manque jamais!"

"Have you many visitors here to see it?" I inquired again, after a pause.

"Pour ça oui ma foi oui. C'est à dire il y avait beaucoup de monde, quand tout cela était nouvellement monté. Ce jour là il y avait ici pal mal des gens de la Rochefoucauld, et même de Montbron."

"Comment, donc! quand tout cela était monté!" said I; "Qu'est ce que vous voulez dire? Tout ça est aussi vieux que les colines. Il n'y a rien de l'art là!"

“ Quoi ! comment ! sacré nom de mille diables ! ” cried the now utterly outraged miller ; “ vous croyez que tout cela est vieux ! vous voulez dire qu’il n’y a pas de l’art là ! regardez donc, s’il vous plait, ces roues, toutes en fer ! où est ce que vous en avez vû pareilles, je voudrais bien savoir ! Regardez donc . . . ” &c.

The whimsical game we had been playing at cross questions and crooked answers was now evident ; and I hastened to explain to my angry host, whose feelings I had so unwittingly insulted in their tenderest point, the mistake we had mutually made.

“ Les grottes ! Ah ! c’est différent, par exemple ! ” said he, with a shrug, and still appearing not above half satisfied that no depreciation was intended of the unique machinery of his mill, as he conceived it to be. I thought it, under the circumstances, not prudent to attempt the quixotic task of correcting the pleasing impression left on his mind, by my unintentional admission that there were no such mills in England ; and, as my young conductor was now ready with a couple of lanterns, one for himself and one for me, I accompanied him to the caverns without staying to admire any longer the wonders — far

more extraordinary in the good miller's estimation—of his “roues toutes en fer.”

The “grottes de Rencogne” are situated about a quarter of a mile from the mill, farther down the stream; and the entrance to them is by a hole in the side of the rock, some ten or twelve feet above the level of the water. It is immediately above it that the shapeless masses of masonry, overgrown with bushes before mentioned, still point out the site of an ancient castle; and, in all probability, the vast caverns beneath were here, as at La Rochefoucauld, approached from the interior of the building, and were used to serve some of the purposes of concealment, escape, or imprisonment, so constantly incidental to the stormy life of the old feudal times. In both cases, indeed, it is very possible that the facilities offered by the nature of the localities for objects so all-important in those days may have been the first cause of the selection of the spots to build on.

The grottoes of Rencogne are exceedingly extensive; indeed, all the numerous ramifications of their recesses have not been explored, and are unknown even to the peasants of the neighbourhood. The various passages, however, some ascending, some descending,

and the numerous fantastically-shaped caves, some of whose roofs were scarcely high enough to admit of a man's standing upright under them, while others were raised so high above our heads as to be undistinguishable by the light of our lanterns, which we traversed, were quite sufficient in number and extent to render it extremely imprudent to venture among them without a guide. There was every where abundant evidence of the continued action of water. Huge stalactites, in all the varied and grotesque shapes which these formations so constantly assume, depended from the vast, shapeless vaults in every direction. In many instances, the gradually increasing mass had, in its downward progress, reached the ground, and thus formed a lofty pillar, around the base of which the ever-active architect was producing a wide-spread pedestal of fresh incrustations.

A little brook runs through a long series of the caves, and the rippling of its rapid waters, multiplied by a hundred confused echoes from the differently-shaped vaults which overarch it in its course, produces in different parts of the caverns a variety of sounds, which resemble, when heard at one point, a rushing

and trampling of many feet; at another, a musically-toned hum as of distant bells, and at a third are magnified into the hollow-voiced roar of a large cataract.

At last we came to a spot where the earth at the bottom of the cavern had been dug. There was a hole about three feet deep, and the earth which had been taken from it was lying still loose upon the sides. This, my guide told me, had been dug last year, in his presence, by a gentleman who seemed to have come to Rencogne for the express purpose.

He arrived, my guide told me, on horseback, with a valise behind him, rode up to the mill, and requested to be conducted forthwith to the caverns. Before entering them he opened his valise, and took thence some papers, which he carried into the cave with him, as well as a pickaxe and shovel, which he borrowed at the mill. All the time that my guide was conducting him through the caverns, he was continually consulting his papers, and measuring the distances; and at last, when he came to the spot where we were now standing, he immediately fixed upon it as the point for which he appeared to be searching, and commenced digging the hole I

now saw. He had not dug far, said my informant, before he found several human bones, all which he carefully gathered together. I asked the young man how he knew that they were human bones; upon which he said that he had seen the long bones of the leg, and a skull. The stranger collected all he could find, and, carrying them out of the cavern, put them into his valise, and rode off.

I should not wonder, added the guide, if you were still to find some more bones, if you looked for them. And, in fact, on moving the earth about a little with my stick, I did find several small bones, which might, as far as I could tell, be fragments of a man's ribs. But I am not anatomist enough to know whether they were such or not. All my cross-questioning failed to elicit any further particulars of this singularly mysterious seeming story; and when, at my return to La Rochefoucauld, I repeated what I had been told, I could not succeed in obtaining any information on the matter.

My walk back to the little town was more agreeable than my journey to Rencogne had been, for the heat of the day had in a great measure abated; but I arrived too late to go

on by the little cross-country mail to Limoges ; and was therefore obliged to remain that night at La Rochefoucauld.

As I was sauntering through the little town in the cool of the evening, I found a large assembly of the townsfolks gathered together at a spot where the crossing of two ways, near the outskirts of the town, caused a tolerably large open space. The object of the "reunion" was an al fresco ball. There were, I should think, as many as two hundred lads and lasses assembled ; and, when I arrived, a dance was just about to begin. A rustic, with a fiddle at his shoulder, was standing, high above the heads of the surrounding crowd, on a tall butt ; and, that all the party might be equally benefited by his strains, which were somewhat drowned by the noisy mirth, and sometimes contradictory commands of his audience, the dance was to be executed around him.

It was a long time before all were ready. The assortment of the party into couples was not effected without much vociferation ; and several false starts happened before they at length all went off together. The dance appeared to consist simply of following each other round and round in a huge circle, of

which the fiddler was the centre. At first, they began very slowly, in a sort of measured walk. Gradually the speed increased, and the exercise became sufficiently violent. Then some fell, and were run over by those behind; some shouted, some laughed; and the fun became fast and furious. “Sudor fluit undique rivis.” And, before the energetic fiddler ceased his labours, the whole multitude were blended into a confused medley of struggling heads, bodies, arms, and legs.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Journey to Limoges—Arrondissement of Confolens—Superstitions prevalent in that part of the country—Chabanois—Truffles—Quantity of them annually obtained in the Department—Valley of the Vienne—Limoges—Roman Antiquities—Subterranean Aqueduct—Amphitheatre—St. Michel des Lions—Superb Tower—The Cathedral—Fete des Brandons—Profane Invocation to St. Martial—Viscounts of Limoges—Fete de l'Ostension—Curious Superstitious Practices still existing in the Limousin—Cross at St. Junien des Combs—Whimsical Patron Saint at Darnac—Dislike of the Limousin Peasants to Legal Proceedings—Their Appendix to the Lord's Prayer—Limousin Language—Troubadours who have written in it—Its Antiquity—Its similarity to the Catalan Tongue—Backwardness of the Limousin.

At four o'clock the next morning I started for Limoges in a voiture, which passed through from Angoulême, and reached my destination about two in the afternoon. The distance is fifty-four miles. The first part of the road passes through the arrondissement of Confolens, a district in which the inhabitants have retained their former habits and ideas much more than in the rest of the department.

Several strange superstitions still continue

in full vigour among them. For instance, he, says the Angoumoisin of the arrondissement of Confolens, who shall, on the morning of the 1st of May, steep a linen cloth in the dew on the grass in his neighbour's field, shall that year have a double crop on his own ground, while his injured neighbour shall have none. Of course such a feat can only be accomplished by being up in the morning, while the sluggard, on whom it is practised, is still in bed. May not, therefore, the tradition which perpetuates this belief have been originally intended to signify that the farm of the early riser should be in good condition, while that of the sluggard should be unproductive.

Another ancient superstition teaches that he who, on St. John's day, shall steal a plant of hemp from his neighbour's field, shall have as many bull-calves born in his cow-house as he has cows; while he from whom the plant has been stolen shall have only female offspring from his cows. An English farmer would hardly understand the advantage gained by this last theft.

Then a handful of manure, stolen from another's mixon on any day between that of St. John and that of St. Peter, has the effect of

doubling the thief's crops, and rendering totally unproductive the land of the man thus robbed.

So perfectly believed and so universal throughout this part of the country are these superstitions, that, on the fateful nights, every owner of a field fails not to watch all night against the perpetration of any of the above important frauds; and if any one, says a topographical writer on this country, should attempt to achieve any of these thefts, though only in joke, he would infallibly be shot; for the peasants are perfectly persuaded that the law would not punish him who should kill a man under such circumstances.

It is believed, also, that it brings ill luck for a whole year to suffer a neighbour to take a light from your hearth at any time between Christmas and the first day of the year; that bread baked on All Soul's day — *le jour des Morts*, as it is termed in France — or during the Rogations, is unwholesome; that every disease is specially under the dominion of some particular saint, &c. Thus epilepsy is under the especial jurisdiction of St. Trinity, which the peasants take to be the name of a saint; and St. Anne presides over the suckling of infants and cattle. It very frequently

happens that the poor peasant is much better acquainted with the names of every saint in the calendar than with that of the disease which is afflicting him; and the question which then arises, as to what saint he ought to put himself under on the occasion, is thus solved. An old woman drops some morsels of bread into a large basin of water, repeating as she drops each piece the name of some popular saint, known to be conversant with some of the diseases to which the people are subject; and the piece of bread which first sinks to the bottom of the basin indicates to which of these protectors the sick person must address themselves.

Soon after passing Chabanois, a little village, where we stayed more than an hour for the purpose of eating a sufficiently miserable breakfast, we quitted the department of La Charente and the Angoumois, and entered that of La Haute Vienne, formerly part of the province of Limousin. There is a good deal of forest in this part of the country, and a considerable quantity of truffles are found in it. They are found also in the vineyards and corn-lands; but those which grow among the roots and under the shadow of the oak are deemed the best. The quantity sold in

the various markets of the department of La Charente Inferieure is estimated at 200,000 pounds, and they fetch an average price of a franc and a half a pound. Almost the whole of this property is said to be stolen from the proprietors and farmers of the lands which produce these much coveted little roots. The peasants hunt for them during the night; and it does not appear that any very active measures are taken by the farmers to put a stop to this sort of poaching.

Near the frontier of the two departments the road comes close down to the bank of the Vienne, already a considerable stream, and follows the course of the river, at a greater or lesser distance, the rest of the way to Limoges. The valley is wide, shelving, and well wooded; and in some parts the bed of the river is extremely rocky. The hills become gradually more considerable as the road approaches Limoges; but there is nothing which can be called picturesque in this part of the Vienne's course.

Limoges is a large, uninteresting-looking town, whose white-walled and red-tiled houses are spread in a rather straggling manner over a gentle rounded eminence on the bank of the Vienne. The city has less to please

the eye of the artist or excite the curiosity of the antiquarian than most of the ancient provincial capitals of France. The traces of medieval architecture are less numerous than usual, although the infinite number of religious houses with which the town was formerly studded might lead one to expect that the contrary would have been the case. But there seems reason to believe that the days of the Roman rule were those in which the prosperity and importance of Limoges were the greatest. It was the central point at which several great military roads met, and became, at an early period of the Roman invasion, one of their most important headquarters. It was the capital of the tribe of Lemovices, who voluntarily submitted themselves to the Roman conqueror, and always remained faithful to him; and this, rather than any advantage in the site, tended to render the "Lemovicum civitas" a flourishing Gallo-Roman city.

The vast subterranean aqueduct, which the conquerors constructed for the supply of their baths and fountains—those objects of primary importance in every spot inhabited by the refined and luxurious masters of the world—still remains in repair, and still supplies

the fountain of "Aigoulène," as well as the gardens and irrigated meadows in the vicinity of the town, with a copious stream of that "soft water," whose quality gave to the "Fons aquæ lenis" its inviting name. Traces of a proconsular palace, of Roman fortifications, and of a camp, may still be observed; and various relics of Roman civilization and splendour—fragments of mosaic pavement, tumulary inscriptions, urns, vases, and mutilated portions of sculptured friezes—have from time to time been found.

The remains of a large amphitheatre were still visible in 1823, but its site is occupied by the "Place d'Orsay," the handsomest modern part of the town; and the progress of *improvement and embellishment* have entirely swept from the face of the soil all traces of it. On an eminence immediately above the "Place d'Orsay," which, from the shape of the ground, I should conjecture to have been the site of the spectator's part of the amphitheatre, there is now a promenade, which commands a pleasing view of the wide valley of the Vienne, though the river itself is not visible thence.

The best view of the town, too, is from the high grounds in this direction; but it is an un-

interesting one. The principal, and, indeed, the only ornament of the town of any beauty is the tower of the church of St. Michel des Lions, which stands on the highest point of the hill. It is a singularly light and elegant structure, surmounted by a lofty spire, whose apex is sadly disfigured by a huge gold ball. This tower was built at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and is, from the beauty of its proportions and its wonderful lightness, an admirable specimen of the unrivalled talents of the architects of that splendid period of the art.

The cathedral, dedicated to St. Stephen, is an edifice of the thirteenth century, and contains many curious details of architecture, and a great number of rich specimens of the ornaments invented by the quaint taste of that century; but, as a whole, it was destroyed at the period of the wars of religion, and has never been restored. It must have been a fine church when entire. The choir and the north transept are still perfect, and, though somewhat heavy and sombre, are not deficient in majesty and grandeur of proportion. At that which was the west end, stands the now isolated tower, and between this and the little bit of the nave which remains, is an

“hiatus valdè deffendus,” the result of Huguenot fury and fanaticism. The church is now terminated to the west by a huge dead wall, which detracts much, by its own exceeding ugliness, from the interior appearance of what has been left of the church. The deserted tower, curtailed of the spire which once surmounted it, is in no wise remarkable, and sinks into entire insignificance when compared with its more fortunate neighbour of St. Michel des Lions.

Though the cathedral is dedicated to St. Stephen, the inhabitants of Limoges do not own him as their especial saint. St. Martial is honoured as the apostle of the Limousin, and the peculiar patron of the city; and it was in the church dedicated to him at Limoges that the “Fête des Brandons,” as it was called, was celebrated. This religious ceremony, which seems to have partaken more largely of the nature of a bacchanalian revel, was celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent. Priests and congregation were, for the most part, alike drunk, and the most absurd and profane practices and language were mixed with the performance of the sacred office. At the end of every psalm, for instance, instead of the “Gloria Patri,” the whole congregation, suit-

ing the action to the word, shouted out in the Limousin patois, "San Marceau, pregat per nous, et nous èpingaren per bous;" i.e. "Saint Martial! pray for us, and we will dance for you!" This monstrous usage was in practice so late as the time of Louis XIV.; and a variety of other strange superstitions peculiar to this part of the country are not, even at the present day, entirely eradicated from among the peasantry.

In old times, the viscounts of Limoges, whom a writer on the Limousin styles "les plus superstitieux seigneurs dont l'histoire ait consacré le souvenir," almost peopled their city with religious establishments. They filled the whole province with an incredible quantity of relics of all sorts; and, during a long period, a festival, called the "Fête de l'Ostension," was celebrated throughout the Limousin once in every seven years; it lasted two months, and during that period "les corps saints" were publicly exposed to the veneration of the people. All these circumstances, together with the backwardness arising from their central position, have tended to make the Limousin retain to a later period than almost any other province the superstitious practices and strange, quaint notions of the middle ages.

The peasants of the Limousin, for instance, up to the present day, take care, when they go to church to be married, to carry a quantity of salt in their pockets, as a preservative against sorcerers, who are supposed to be particularly on the alert to do mischief on that occasion. The bridegroom, too, would not for the world omit kneeling on the skirt of his bride's robe as they kneel together before the altar, as he is perfectly convinced that, did he fail to do so, he would never be master in the *ménage*. On the return of the newly-married couple to their house, the bride always finds a broom laid ready at the door of her future dwelling; and with this it is expected that she will, immediately on her arrival, thoroughly sweep the house, as an emblem and sort of earnest of her notability and good housewifery. If two or more couples should chance, as frequently occurs, to be married at the same time, there is sure to be a grand battle at the door of the church as they go out; all parties being perfectly well assured that he or she who shall upon that occasion quit the church last, shall be the first to die. When either husband or wife dies, the body is laid in the coffin in the shirt which the deceased wore on the day of their marriage,

which is always carefully laid by for this purpose. Among a superstitious people, death will most naturally be always the subject of very many of their superstitions. One of the most striking of those that prevail on this subject in the Limousin is, that a death is supposed to pollute all the water and milk which may be in the house at the time, and it is always thrown away by the peasants.

There is at Saint Junien Les Combes—a little chef lieu de Canton, through which the road passes between Chabanois and Limoges—a cross, respecting which a sufficiently whimsical superstition prevails in the neighbourhood. All the young girls in the country side who wish to be married—i. e. every daughter of Eve who has reached fifteen years old—make a point of going to St. Junien, there to invoke the good offices of St. Eutrope, who is supposed to be particularly favourable to such suppliants. They there form a long procession, and, after having many times walked round and round the cross, each attaches to it the garter she wears on her left leg. It is unnecessary to observe that St. Eutrope's cross is never without an abundant adornment of these many-hued linsey-woolsey streamers.

At the village of Darnac, the patron saint of the commune has the privilege of curing all the local diseases which can affect the different parts of the body. To avail one'sself, however, of this advantage, it is necessary to hit, with a little ball of wool thrown from a certain distance, the part of the Saint's figure which corresponds with the votary's part afflicted. The whimsical saint pays no attention to any other mode of application. If he is to cure a toothache, it must be intimated to him by a woollen missive adroitly directed against his own holy cheek. To the sufferer from rheumatism in the right knee he is inexorable, if the awkward applicant should by mistake or want of skill direct his blow to his own sinister joint. These regulations would have seemed more intelligible if it had been St. Hubert, who had promulgated them ; but it must be presumed that the village saint of Darnac was also a marksman. The good saint's compassion, however, is never exhausted. The clumsiest votary may have as many shots as he pleases, and the holy man stands to be pelted with inexhaustible patience, till at length the right spot is hit. Only, the same morsel of wool must never serve twice. On this point, the saint is very

particular ; and, to avoid all mistakes on the subject, the sacristan picks up the wool as fast as it is thrown, and carries it away into the sacristy. It frequently occurs that the saint's votaries pelt him during mass ; and upon these occasions not a few stray pellets reach the head and person of the officiating priest. The good man, however, pays no attention to these accidents, and can hardly be expected to be very much scandalized by the indecorum of a practice which supplies him with his next year's homespun cloth.

Unlike the advanced and far more highly educated Normans, the Limousin peasants have an exceeding antipathy to all law processes and the forms of the courts. The curé of the village is generally their only judge, from whose decision the parties in any quarrel rarely wish to appeal. They very commonly add at the end of the Lord's prayer, "*Délivrez nous de tout mal, et de la justice !*" If a peasant is asked what is "*la justice,*" from which he prays to be delivered, he will answer, "*Ce sont les habits bleus, et les robes noires ;*"—the gend'armes that is, and the judges and lawyers.

The language of the peasants is, throughout the Limousin, utterly unintelligible to a

Parisian. They can, for the most part, understand him, but are unable to reply in French. This province gave birth to several once celebrated troubadours, such as Gaucelin Feydit, Bertrand de Bornes, whom M. Villemain calls the Tyrteus of the middle ages, and Bernard de Ventadour. The language in which they wrote is very nearly the same as that which is now the vernacular of the province; and there is great reason to believe that it is the remains of a mother tongue which was spoken by the inhabitants of a large portion of Gaul, before the period of the Roman invasion. "Si l'origine latine de l'idiome provençal peut être facilement admise," says a writer on the Limousin, "il n'en est pas de même pour la langue limousine, qui forme encore le fonds du patois des habitants de la Corrèze: c'est un point qui peut être l'objet d'une contestation scientifique; mais il est hors de doute que cette langue a eu, dans le moyen âge, une grande importance. Le Code donné, en 1238, par Jacques I^{er}, roi d'Aragon, aux habitants du royaume de Valence qu'il venait de conquérir sur les Maures, était écrit en *langue limousine* ou *catalane*. Il est bon de faire remarquer à ce sujet que, déjà vingt-six ans auparavant en

1212, plus de quatre cents Limousins, moines, prélats, chevaliers ou barons, étaient allés s'établir dans la Catalogne, où ils avaient introduit l'usage de leur langue Gaspard Escolano intitule un des chapitres de son histoire de Valence : *De la lengua lemosina y valenciana*, et il le commence en disant 'que la troisième et dernière maîtresse langue de l'Espagne est la *limousine*, et qu'elle est la plus répandue après la castillane.'” Il est certain que les réfugiés espagnols nés en Catalogne, et qui, à diverses époques, ont été envoyés dans le département de la Corrèze, ont toujours compris sur-le-champ les paysans limousins et s'en sont fait comprendre aussi facilement.

The continuation of this ancient tongue, as the vernacular language of the country, has unquestionably been both a cause and a consequence of the backwardness which has for many years been the characteristic of this province. Its central position has contributed to this effect; and it is impossible to travel through the country without perceiving that its inhabitants are in every point of view some fifty years behind those of the neighbouring provinces. How much the Limousin peasant loses by this *backwardness*,

and what he would gain by such a *progress* as most parts of France have made, may be more questionable. If the inhabitants are more ignorant, it is a statistically ascertained fact that crime is less frequent among them than in any other part of the country. In the exceedingly interesting statistical maps drawn up, I believe, by M. Dupin, showing the comparative viciousness and ignorance of the different departments of France by gradations of light and shade, the departments which formed the ancient province of Limousin were marked with the deepest shade in the map, which indicated the intellectual condition of the country, while in the chart, which exhibited its moral state, according to the official returns of the number of crimes committed, this part of the country is distinguished by the greatest proportion of light. This is a very important fact, worth volumes of argument on the nature of the instruction, miscalled education, which so many well-intentioned but mistaken philanthropists would spread among mankind! Still the primitive simplicity of manners and mode of life which characterized all classes in this province some fifty years ago is much changed. The towns have become assimilated to those

in other parts of France, and it is only among the veritable peasants of the rural communes that the interesting remains of old French provincial manners and habits must be sought.*

* See Appendix, No. 3.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Chalus—Fast Mail—Walk to Courbefy—Style of Country—Charcoal Burners—View from the Hill of Courbefy—A Young Artist—Richard Cœur de Lion at Chalus—Siege of the Town—Richard's Death—Walter of Hemingburgh's account of it—Ruins at Chalus—Return to Limoges.

ABOUT one and twenty miles to the southwest of Limoges is the little town of Chalus, before which our lion-hearted Richard received the wound which brought to a close his brilliant and adventurous career. Though anxious to be moving northwards on my return to Paris, I could not but pay a visit to a spot rendered memorable by such a death; and accordingly, on the second evening after my arrival at Limoges, I took a place in the mail that conveys the letters between that town and Perigueux, on which road Chalus is situated. This paragon of a mail professes to leave Limoges at nine p. m. and to travel at the rate of three leagues an hour. I cal-

culated, therefore, on reaching Chalus about twelve o'clock, and getting there a good night's rest. Vain expectation! The mail did not leave Limoges till eleven, and reached Chalus at four the next morning!

As it was a beautiful morning, I determined to avail myself of the cool morning hours to walk to Courbefy, a little village some six or eight miles to the south-east of Chalus, where there are the remains of another feudal castle.

I never had a more romantic or more delightful walk. The country through which I passed is wild and picturesque in a high degree. I have seen scarcely a rood of level ground in the Limousin. The whole country is a sea of hills, for the most part of no great height, which, in that portion of the province I had already traversed, are generally round-topped, open, and cultivated: but between Chalus and Courbefy a great portion of the soil is woodland, and some part open moor. The hills too are here higher, and rise more rapidly from the deeper and narrower valleys which divide them. To use a French phrase, for which we have no exact translation, the face of the country is here much more "*accidenté*" than in the environs of Limoges.

The woods which cover the hills are here and there chequered with fields of corn, and the valleys are generally occupied with green irrigated meadows, on which several herds of small horned cattle were grazing. I observed in the low grounds several pools of water of sufficient size to be dignified with the appellation of little lakes—such as would in our mountain districts be termed tarns. Among the thick growth of underwood, which clothed most of the hill-sides, and sometimes along the edge of the pasture-grounds at the bottom of the valleys, there were a great many very fine old trees—chestnut, oak, and beech. In the midst of this sort of wild scenery, nothing could be more delightfully picturesque than the long secluded-looking green valleys winding away between the woods, with their herds cropping their morning meal, or drinking by the edge of a clear pool, whose still water reflected faithfully their forms, as well as those of the woods on the overhanging crag, which rose from the water-side.

Many a landscape, such as Ruysdael loved to compose, was here ready made to his pencil; and as the sun rose in unclouded splendour, and poured a warmer hue over woodland and valley, and a brighter tint upon the

sparkling surface of the pools and streamlets, many a charming picture presented itself to the eye, which neither Both nor Berghem need have scorned to transfer to their canvas unaltered and unadorned.

As I approached Courbefy, the character of the country became still more wild. The farm houses, few and far between, disappeared altogether. The hills became higher, and were entirely covered with forest, which descended into the valleys, and in several instances left space sufficient only for the streams which water them. There is no path across these hills in the direction I wished to go, or, if there is, I lost it. But the ruins I was in search of crown the summit of the highest hill in this region, and, for several miles before arriving at them, I had but to make my way in as direct a line as the nature of the country would permit, towards the most conspicuous object in the horizon.

A little before arriving at this hill I came upon a wide open space among the woods, in which I found a large camp of charcoal-burners—grimy-vizaged, wild, picturesque-looking Salvator Rosa-like figures, in long striped woollen cloaks. Several large conical piles

were burning in different parts of the cleared area, and about fifty mules, with their pack-saddles and black panniers, were scattered in all directions, and picking a scanty breakfast among the underwood at the edge of the forest. In one part of the open space, surrounded on all sides by the forest, were a few patched and grimy-looking tents, in which the charcoal-burners had passed the night; and now around, and in front of these, were several women and half naked children; the former employed in lighting fires and preparing to cook their morning meal, and the latter in rolling and sprawling on the ground, black with the remains of former charcoal fires, in all the bliss of unrestricted dirt and idleness. This scene too would have made a picture worth the painting.

Soon after leaving this dingy camp, I reached the object of my walk. On the summit of an isolated eminence, higher than any of the hills about it, is a mound, surrounded by a deep trench. The enclosed space is encumbered with a confused mass of thickly-grown shrubs and tangled briars, which almost conceal the enormous masses of masonry strewn over the ground in huge shapeless fragments. The base of one tower still re-

mains erect — the only vestige of the ancient fortress of Courbefy which has not been overthrown. I clambered to the top of this, and, from the highest morsel of rugged wall, looked over as picturesquely wild a prospect as my eye ever rested on. A wide-spread sea of confused hills, almost entirely covered with forest, lay around me: and so deeply shut in among embosoming woods and sylvan solitudes does the spot appear, that one is led to wonder at its selection as the site of a large and noble dwelling, at a period when its seclusion was even greater than at the present day. Its advantages, in a military point of view, are, however, great; and it is the only situation which, for several miles around, could be found uncommanded by any other spot.

In one of the vistas, which opened on all sides between the hills, I could see dimly in the distance the tall tower of Chalus; and I endeavoured by this, and by observing carefully the various other landmarks between me and it, to shape for my return a more direct course than that which I had pursued in coming to Courbefy. But, though I thought that I had well marked the shape of every hill, and the position of each patch of corn-

land which chequered their sides, it was in vain. When I had once more plunged down into the valleys, and entangled myself among the coppices and streams, the labyrinth seemed to become as inextricable as ever. Deep dales, over which my eye from the height of Courbefy had travelled in a direct line, turned out to contain in their recesses impassable bogs and pools ; and my return to Chalus was only the longer and more devious from my attempt to make a way direct across the country.

The little town of Chalus is situated at a small distance to the right of the high road ; but the inns, as is generally the case under such circumstances, have taken up their natural position by the road-side. On arriving by the " *service des depeches*" at four that morning, I had knocked up the stable-boy of the most promising looking hostelry to leave my baggage, and say that I should return in a few hours to breakfast. I came, therefore, not unexpected ; and found breakfast ready, and a chamber assigned me, into which my portmanteau had been taken. On mounting to it, I instantly perceived that this had been opened. The trespasser had not even taken the trouble to replace the straps ; and on

looking into it, I found that every thing had been turned topsy-turvy — taken out and crammed in again, without the smallest attempt at concealing the fact. Not a little wrathful, at what I considered so gross a breach of trust, I returned to the kitchen, and began remonstrating (not very mildly) with the old landlady upon the enormity committed in her house, in return for which I received a violent scolding for making such a fuss about nothing ; and it was not till I had been compelled to exchange my offensive for a defensive tone, that the old lady condescended to inform me that it was her own son who had opened my portmanteau, under the impression that I was a travelling artist ; and that, being also an aspirant sketcher himself, he wanted to see if he could find any drawings to copy as studies ! All this was said with an air that not only bespoke a perfect conviction of the explanation being entirely satisfactory, but also conveyed no small reproach for my churlishness, in having for a moment objected to it. Under these circumstances, I was fain to accept the young Boniface's ardour for the arts as a good and sufficient reason for the rifling of my baggage ; and was not sorry to turn the circum-

stance to account by making acquaintance with the embryo Poussin, and availing myself of his ciceroneship to the antiquities of the place.

After breakfast we walked together down to the town, which is situated on a small stream in a valley below the course of the high road. The whole claim of the obscure little place to a traveller's interest consists in the one memorable fact of its history; but this is quite sufficient to cause a stranger, especially an Englishman, to look on every detail of the locality with interest.

It was in 1199 that King Richard of the Lion Heart, then recently freed from captivity, heard, as he was traversing the Limousin on his way northward, that the Vicomte de Limoges had lately discovered at Chalus, among the Roman ruins, which were then still visible on the hill on which the feudal castle stands, a massive piece of modelled gold, representing in a group the Proconsul Capreolus and all his family. Moderation and self-denial were not numbered among the heroic virtues in the twelfth century any more than they are in the nineteenth; and the power of arm and energy of will, which a hero exhibited in possessing himself of that

which belonged to another, was deemed as glorious by our barbarous ancestors as by our barbarous selves. So the noble Richard, being altogether a hero, bade the Vicomte de Limoges give up the golden prize to him; and, upon the refusal of the French lord to do so, laid siege to the castle of Chalus, in order to take it from him by force.

The siege had continued for two days, and many a soul had already been suddenly sent to its long account, wives made widows, and children fatherless—all for the golden group. Thus the hero monarch was gathering much glory, and had considerable hopes of obtaining what he coveted, besides battering the Frenchman's dwelling about his ears for his impertinence in having refused it to him.

On the third day Richard himself went forth to reconnoitre, and form, according to circumstances, his plan of attack for the day. The castle stood (as its ruins still declare) on a considerable eminence above the valley in which the town is sheltered. Outside the walls of the little burgh, which was in those days fortified, a succession of water-meads occupy the narrow bottom of the valley on either side the small stream: and it was in one of these that on that day the arrow of an

obscure and (till that hour) fameless archer, from the walls of the castle, reached the breast of the most powerful monarch in Christendom.

In the midst of the soft marshy sod of the irrigated meadow there is a solitary rock, rising to the height of some three feet above the surface of the soil; and it was on this that the monarch was standing in the act of observing the defences of the castle, when he received his death-wound. The stone has from that day to the present borne the name of "La Pierre de Maumont" (*mali montis*); and its legend is well known to every peasant in the neighbourhood. Indeed, all the circumstances of this memorable event seem to have made an indelible impression upon the minds of the people, for there is not an inhabitant of Chalus who will not relate the details of the occurrence as if it had happened within their own remembrance. The name of the archer who drew the fatal bolt has not been forgotten: it was Bertrand de Gourdon. And better had it been for Bertrand de Gourdon to have lost the arm which did—as he, poor soldier, thought—such good service to France, than to have struck the mark he aimed at. For, when the deed was told to Philip August-

tus, and the name of the stout bowman, exultingly expecting promotion and reward, was added to the relation, that king was graciously pleased to express magnanimously his regret at the death of his brother (though rival) monarch; and, as a mark of his generous feeling on the subject, commanded the wretched Bertrand to be torn to pieces by wild horses!

Richard's death, and the circumstances preceding it, are curiously and graphically related by the old Yorkshire chronicler, Walter of Hemingoburgh. It should seem that, after all, the monarch's own imprudence, rather than poor Bertrand de Gourdon's bolt, was the cause of his death. For the medical men had at first hopes, though the wound was serious, of curing him, and strictly enjoined to this end a regular and sober mode of living. The self-willed hero, however, the slave of his passions, in spite of all warning, persisted in indulging in libertinage and excess. The result was that his case was soon hopeless.

As soon as this was known, Walter, archbishop of Rouen, presented himself at the king's bed-side, and said:

“My son, set in order your affairs, for you must die.”

“Ha!” quoth the king, unmoved, “say you so, my lord archbishop! Is this meant, pray, for a menace or for a pleasantry?”

“King!” returned the archbishop, “I jest not; neither do I needlessly threaten. Your death is inevitable, and at hand.”

“Supposing it were so, then,” said the king, “what would you have me do?”

“I would have you think,” answered the ecclesiastic, “of the three daughters you have to marry.”

“Come, enough of this! said I not that you were jesting? You know well, archbishop, that I have no daughters.”

“Sire,” returned the metaphorical archbishop, “you have three daughters, whom you have maintained for a long time. Your eldest daughter is *AMBITION*; your second, *AVARICE*; and your third, *LUXURY*. These three daughters you have had from your youth up; and you have ever been too much attached to them.”

“You say true,” replied the king, not yet alarmed in earnest; “and thus I give them in marriage. The eldest I give to the templars; the second to the grey friars; and the third to the black monks.”

“Speak not thus, my son,” said the arch-

bishop, "for in truth your moments are numbered. Death is at hand, and your time for repentance all too short."

The king then for the first time became seriously alarmed, and comprehended that indeed he was about to die. The change in his bearing was as violent as instantaneous. He shed tears, and demanded of the archbishop what he should do.

"Do penance," was the answer, "while yet life and volition are left to you."

The king protested that he was truly penitent, and desired the Archbishop to witness the proofs of it. He then ordered himself to be bound hand and foot, and flagellated till the blood streamed from every part of his body. And this discipline he caused to be repeated three times. He then ordered himself to be dragged on the ground by a cord before the sacred Viaticum, which he received, together with Walter of Rouen's absolution, a little while before his death.

And so perished Richard of the Lion Heart, a man not unennobled by generous and royal qualities, and far from being the most baleful to humanity of hero monarchs.

The most remarkable part of the ruins of Chalus castle which yet remains, is a tall,

round, slender tower, whose only entrance, as was not uncommon in the donjon towers of feudal castles, is at a considerable height from the ground. It was probably approached by a drawbridge, which communicated with some other part of the building ; and, as this has now perished, the tower is, except by means of a high ladder, inaccessible. My companion told me that he had been inside it, and that nothing but the mere skeleton remained. The holes in the stones, in which the beams had rested, still marked the former position of the floors, but every vestige of woodwork had perished.

A portion also of the walls of a building, which appears to have been the chapel, are yet standing at the distance of a few paces from the tower ; and, on the other side of the eminence, the remains of a body of building, which contained probably the principal dwelling-rooms of the castle, have been rendered available in the construction of a farmhouse.

After I had spent the best part of the day in rambling about the ruins, and in the vale beneath them—not omitting to perch myself on the almost conical top of the stone of Mau-mont—I returned to my inn on the high road,

and thence by the first opportunity to Limoges, which journey again took me the same unconscionable time to perform as upon the previous occasion.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE journey from Limoges to Paris is an uninteresting one, perhaps as much so as any line of road in France. Passing through some of the most backward districts of France, the want of interest arising from the population is not atoned for by any redeeming beauties of external nature. My return, therefore, to the capital was made rapidly, and the chronicle of it in my note-book is composed after the manner of an epitaph, recording only a commencement and an ending.

Here, then, I bring my summer's wandering to a conclusion, well content with the quantum of present amusement and gratification, and of pleasant reminiscences laid up in store for future use, which I have gathered during the months so employed.

Of instruction and of food for more serious

thinking have I obtained aught ? or have I aught to offer to my readers as the result of my journeyings and observations, more important than notices of picturesque localities, and dallyings in the shady lanes of history and the pleasant places of antiquity ?

It may be that the pages of a summer tourist, fortunate if they succeed in affording to the reader a few hours' amusement, or in awakening a curiosity respecting the countries described in them, are neither wished nor expected to contain much of those graver lessons which the observation of a people cannot but afford to the moralist and philosopher. It may be, also, that those who look for such fruit of travel are not likely to seek it in these unpretending volumes. It is impossible, however, for the most superficial thinker to look upon so large a portion of any country as that visited by the author, without having observed much that must have afforded data for important deduction, and food for speculation useful in the formation of his own opinions. And in France, at the present day, the lesson, which her social condition has to teach, is, in truth, so plainly written on every one of the varied faces of society, that he who runs may read.

The spectacle presented to his contemplation is that of a nation advancing in physical prosperity, while it is rapidly sinking into moral barbarism; of a vast people hastening to destruction by reason of the dissolution of every tie that binds men together into societies. When the utter corruption, emptiness, faithlessness, and hypocrisy, of both church and state in the later, and what are even still deemed the *splendid and glorious* (!) days of the old French monarchy, were such that the nation could no longer be held together by them, and the social system was scattered into atoms at the Revolution, the men, into whose hands fell the attempt at reconstruction—standing alone amid ruins, unaided by traditions of former wisdom, having no superiors to guide but God alone, whom their material senses could not see, and no laws but his, which, as being in part mysteries, they could not comprehend, and therefore rejected—set their hands to the work before them, with the intention of providing all for their new nation, which, according to the reasonings of their intellect, man seemed to want. The principles by which the wealth of nations is created and increased were studied, and not without some success. The

nation has been and is still increasing in riches to the present day.

And now may be seen—a notable lesson for the whole civilized world—the fortunes and fate of a society so constituted. A practical, if not theoretical, materialism, almost universal—progressive demoralization, cold, isolated individualism, the necessary offspring of much vaunted independence—immeasurable, avowed, and theorized selfishness—an aristocracy of wealth rapidly superseding all other distinctions—severation of the classes of society, each from that above and below it—a populace restless, discontented, craving, learning daily to believe nothing, wretched, hating its rulers—thus works the curse, the awarded punishment and not less naturally inevitable result of nationally abandoning spiritualism for materialism, worshipping sense, and extirpating FAITH.

The lesson is not a pleasant one to read, the more so that, besides the cosmopolite interest which a Catholic must feel in the fate of this great nation of so many millions of souls, we cannot disguise from our eyes our own danger. “*Proximus ardet Ugalegon!*” Are we uninfluenced by the causes of our neighbours’ conflagration? Are there no

points of similarity between the two nations? Alas! the answer to that question must be one very far from tranquillizing or satisfactory. But we have yet a hope, a standard, and a rallying point which France has lost. We have yet our church. With us that salt, which God has given to preserve and civilize mankind, has not quite lost its savour; and by His blessing may our earth be yet so seasoned with it, as to be preserved from the rottenness and dissolution which is so imminently threatening our neighbour people!

APPENDIX.

A P P E N D I X.

No. 1.

THE Abbaye de la Couronne was built under the independent counts of Angoulême, of the very ancient house of Taillefer. This family traced their descent from one Wegrin, or Ulgrin, to whom Charles the Bald entrusted the government of the county of Angoulême in the year 866, and who, after the example of the other governors of provinces, succeeded in appropriating it and making it hereditary in his family.

From the house of Taillefer the county of Angoulême passed into that of Lezignem, or Lusignan, from which it was confiscated, and united to the domain of the crown. The circumstances attending this confiscation are peculiar, and characteristic of the times, as well as more especially of the characters of two of the monarchs of France, which are not badly hit off in the following extract from a little work on Angoulême, which the reader is not likely to meet with:—

“Alors que la famille des Lusignans, ou Lesignem, comme on l'écrivoit jadis, avoit à-la-fois les comtés de la Marche et d'Angoulême, Guy de Lusignan comte d'Angoulême et frère de Guy de Lusignan comte de la Marche, voyoit la vieillese

l'entraîner vers la tombe sans avoir la douceur de laisser des enfans qui pussent perpétuer son nom et hériter de ses honneurs. Philippe-le-Bel régnoit ; et le trône n'a point connu de mortel tout à-la-fois plus cupide et plus avare. Ami du crime par caractère, mais par amour-propre jaloux d'une sorte de gloire, il répugna toute sa vie à acquérir par usurpation ouverte ce qu'il pouvoit s'approprier par ruse, par supercherie, ou par séduction. Le fertile héritage, que la main caduque de Guy de Lusignan alloit laisser échapper, le tenta. Il ne rougit point de s'abaisser au rôle honteux de cette jeunesse effrontée qui dans Rome antique ployoit ses passions intéressées aux caprices des vieillards opulens, et prodiguoit l'opprobre de ses caresses à l'espoir, souvent chimérique, d'une place lucrative dans leur testament. A l'exemple de ces adulateurs mercenaires, Philippe le Bel devenu le courtisan suprême de l'un de ses vasseaux, graces à sa bassesse solennelle, se fit jour dans le cœur du vieux Lusignan, et la vanité, cette dernière foiblesse des vieillards, détermina la conquête que l'avare monarque avoit méditée. Lusignan oublia sans peine ceux que le sang attachoit à ses destins, et le roi qui le flattoit lui parut l'héritier que la nature lui présentoit. Il fit un testament, et Philippe fût déclaré par lui son légataire unique, universel. Philippe satisfait, lui fit la faveur de le laisser mourir : et c'en est une quand on s'est donné un roi pour héritier.

“ Il mourut donc : mais Guy de Lusignan comte de la Marche vivoit, et le testament de son frère ne lui plut pas. La voie de la justice lui parut longue ; et il est rare que l'on gagne un procès contre un roi. Il trouva plus court de couper le nœud gordien que de le débrouiller. Il brûla le testament et se mit en possession du comté d'Angoulême. Mais quand il s'agit d'un roi, où la ruse échoue la force répare ; et Guy de Lusignan perdit à la fois et l'Angoumois et le comté de la Marche.

“ Dans d’autres temps, Louis Hutin donna ce même comté d’Angoulême à Jeanne de France reine de Navarre, et femme de Philippe comte d’Evreux. Les Anglais s’en emparèrent. Le roi Jean qui n’étoit alors que duc de Normandie, sous prétexte de venger sa tante, reprit Angoulême. La générosité peut-être, et la justice sans doute, exigeoient qu’il rendit cette conquête aux enfans de Jeanne de France ; mais il prétendit que ces enfans seroient de méchantes gens et que cette crainte l’autorisoit à les dépouiller. En conséquence il donna leur bien à l’un de ses favoris, Charles d’Espagne connétable de France. La providence accomplit une prédiction que l’ambition injuste avoit inventée pour lui servir d’excuse : car en effet l’un de ces enfans de Jeanne de France fût ce Charles le Mauvais que ses forfaits ont rendu si fameux. Furieux d’avoir perdu l’héritage de sa mère il assassina le connétable à l’Aigle en Normandie ; mais loin que cet attentat tournât à son avantage il ne fit que consacrer sa perte. On confisqua au profit de la couronne ce comté d’Angoulême qu’il prétendoit recouvrer. Et ce fut ainsi que deux rois l’un par avarice, l’autre par ambition, provoquèrent deux crimes dans deux différens héritiers de ce comté d’Angoulême pour avoir le droit précieux de se l’approprier.

“ Les deux traits que nous venons de citer sont les seuls que l’on puisse recueillir avec quelque fruit dans cette longue succession d’hommes qui, depuis Charles le Chauve jusqu’à nos jours, ont porté le titre de *comtes* et de *ducs* d’Angoulême ; et ils sont précieux, moins par les détails, que parce qu’ils peignent parfaitement le caractère de deux rois célèbres dans la monarchie : l’un, Philippe le Bel, par sa constance dans le système qu’il avoit embrassé d’affoiblir la puissance des grands en diminuant leurs propriétés ; l’autre, Jean second, par cette fausseté de principes et de raisonnemens qui trompa toujours un cœur naturellement bon, franc et loyal, et qui attira sur sa tête tant de désastres, et par contre-coup tant de fléaux sur le

royaume qu'il gouvernoit. Philippe le Bel eût un mauvais cœur avec un sens droit ; Jean eût un esprit faux avec un cœur excellent : et disons le à la honte de l'humanité, entre ces deux rois ce fut Philippe le Bel qui régna avec gloire. Seroit il donc vrai que pour un roi la justesse de l'esprit vaille mieux que les bonnes qualités du cœur ? S'il en étoit ainsi, ce seroit une cruelle satire contre les hommes qui sont gouvernés."

No. II.

Some interesting particulars of this celebrated battle, and of the death of Condé, are given in the following extract taken from the above quoted work :—

“ Ce sont d'un côté le duc d'Anjou, fils de Catherine de Médicis, et depuis Henri III ; et de l'autre, le prince de Condé, l'amiral Coligny, et le roi de Navarre, encore enfant, et le seul cependant que prédit l'issue de cette bataille et aperçut les fautes que l'on y commit. Le duc d'Anjou avoit pour lieutenans-généraux le *maréchal de Tavannes*, le *maréchal de Cossé*, et le *duc de Biron*, qui jouissoient alors d'une grande réputation dans les armes. Ce fut par leurs conseils que le duc d'Anjou se détermina à attaquer l'armée des protestans avant qu'elle eût fait sa jonction avec le duc des Deux-Ponts qui étoit en marche pour la joindre : et ce fut le 13 mars 1569 que les deux armées se trouvèrent en présence.

“ Les protestans ne prévoyoient pas qu'ils seroient forcés à combattre si-tôt : et il paroît que, malgré la célébrité de leurs chefs, Condé, Coligny, d'Andelot et plusieurs autres, les précautions les plus ordinaires avoient été négligées. Ils avoient bien eu le soin de faire couper les ponts de *Châteauneuf* et de mettre ainsi la Charente entr'eux et le duc d'Anjou, mais ils ne firent point éclairer les mouvemens de ce prince, et se laissèrent ainsi surprendre.

“ Il est certain que le duc d'Anjou fit rétablir ces ponts avec

une célérité digne d'un grand général ; et, faisant passer, dans la même nuit, la rivière à son armée, il marcha sans s'arrêter pour s'emparer des hauteurs que les protestans n'avoient point songé à garnir de troupes ; faute bien importante, car de ce poste avantageux ils auroient pu facilement culbuter l'armée royale, dont la retraite, qui se seroit faite alors en tumulte, seroit devenue très-dangereuse pour elle par la nécessité de repasser les ponts, où les soldats en désordre se seroient précipités, et auroient abandonné de la sorte une victoire facile à leurs adversaires.

“ Le duc d'Anjou, maître des positions, reconnut facilement l'incertitude que sa présence subite répandoit parmi ses ennemis. Il se développa alors sur sa gauche dans l'intention de les tourner. Là, *Soubise, Languillière, Puviaut, Cressonnière*, et quelques autres chefs soutinrent le choc pendant quelque temps ; mais Soubise et Languillière ayant été faits prisonniers, et la *Mesanchere* et *Braudainiere* ayant été tués, la déroute se mit parmi les protestans, et la gauche duc d'Anjou perça.

“ La résistance étoit plus forte à la droite : le chemin étoit plus difficile, et il falloit chasser les protestans d'une chaussée qu'ils occupoient. Le duc d'Anjou vainqueur à sa gauche porta à cette droite la majeure partie de ses forces. Les protestans songèrent alors à la retraite. Ce fut dans cet instant que le prince de Condé, furieux du mauvais succès de cette journée, se précipita, avec la témérité d'un soldat bien plus qu'avec la prudence d'un chef, à la tête de quatre cents hommes de cavalerie sur la colonne royale. Il y porta le désordre pendant un moment, mais bien-tôt le nombre l'accabla ; la plupart de ses gens furent tués. Enfin son cheval ayant été grièvement blessé, lui-même se vit renversé. Privé de tous les siens qui dans ce moment avoient péri ou dispuoient encore leur vie, personne ne se présentant pour lui donner un cheval frais, et voyant qu'il n'y avoit plus d'espoir de salut, il appela d'*Argence* et *Saint-Jean* qu'il reconnut, se rendit leur prisonnier, en les

priant de lui sauver la vie : mais la fortune qui le poursuivoit amena Montesquiou qui, l'ayant reconnu, lui tira un coup de pistolet à bout touchant et l'assassina.

Cet attentat commis avec un sang-froid si cruel a été révoqué en doute par plusieurs écrivains, et il faut convenir qu'il révolte tout homme qui conserve dans le cœur quelques sentimens d'honneur. Le baron de Montesquiou étoit capitaine des gardes-du-corps du duc d'Anjou, et il est présumable que pour jeter de l'odieux sur ce prince on prétendit que Montesquiou n'avoit pu commettre ce crime que par son ordre. Cette idée fut confirmée dans beaucoup d'esprits par l'impunité de Montesquiou. Il me semble au contraire que cette impunité même auroit dû détruire tous les soupçons ; car en effet de quoi punir Montesquiou s'il n'étoit pas coupable ? et si le duc d'Anjou eût pu lui donner un tel ordre, on sait assez de quelle manière les hommes puissans savent se défaire des instrumens dont ils abusent pour commettre les grands crimes politiques. J'ai sous les yeux, dans le moment où j'écris cet événement, dont la vérité est encore un problème que l'on ne résoudra sans doute jamais, l'ouvrage de la Poupelinière, auteur contemporain, imprimé à Basle en 1572, qui semble révoquer lui-même en doute l'assassinat attribué à Montesquiou. Voici le texte : ' Mais le malheur le survoit de si près (le prince de Condé) qu'ayant esté reconnu, à même instant fut occis par Montesquiou (comme aucuns disent) qui lui outreperça la teste d'une pistolade mortelle.'

“ Cette expression, *comme aucuns disent*, suffit pour prouver que dès le temps de la Poupelinière on n'avoit point de certitude que Montesquiou fût le véritable assassin ; et la Poupelinière ne peut être suspect de partialité en faveur du duc d'Anjou, car il étoit protestant. Un poëte du temps, la Motte Messémé, dans de mauvais vers, mais utiles à l'éclaircissement de l'histoire, attribue cet attentat à un soldat, et non à Montesquiou.

“ Après l’assassinat du prince de Condé, on mit son corps sur une anesse et on le transporta à Jarnac, où le duc d’Anjou étoit entré après la bataille, et on le déposa dans une église. Bientôt après sa famille le réclama pour lui rendre les derniers devoirs, et on le transporta à Vendôme où il fut inhumé dans le tombeau de sa maison.

“ Ainsi périt Louis premier de Bourbon, prince de Condé, doué de toutes les qualités qui constituent les héros, mais sans en avoir la fortune. Quoique petit et contrefait, il étoit plein de graces, spirituel, galant et cher aux femmes. Il s’étoit distingué à la bataille de Saint-Quentin, aux sièges de Calais et de Thionville. Il fut l’ame de la conjuration d’Amboise dont le mauvais succès pensa le conduire à l’échafaud. Mis depuis en liberté, il retourna à la tête des protestans, fut blessé et prisonnier à la bataille de Dreux, perdit celle de Saint-Denis, et enfin périt à celle de Jarnac. Il étoit un de ces hommes que l’infortune se réserve, et la fatalité de son étoile sembloit influencer sur le parti auquel il s’attachoit. Toutes les batailles où il se distingua furent perdues, et on ne pouvoit en accuser son courage ni même ses talens. Le jour de Jarnac, il portoit le bras en écharpe, n’étant pas encore guéri d’une blessure qu’il avoit reçue quelques jours auparavant : il fut même, alors qu’il se dispoit à charger les ennemis, grièvement blessé à la jambe par un cheval fougueux que montoit son beau-frère le *comte* de la Rochefoucault ; et ces deux blessures ne l’empêchèrent pas de combattre.”

This little town of Jarnac gave its name to that Guy de Chabot, seigneur de Jarnac, who fought with François de Vivonne the last judiciary duel in France. It occurred in 1547, under the reign of Henry II. ; and the conquering blow by which De Jarnac put his adversary hors de combat, gave rise to the proverbial expression, “ un coup de Jarnac.” This was the last of these combats “ à l’outrance,” once so common, which was sanctioned by the royal authority. Its result led to

an "ordonnance," forbidding all such engagements for the future; and some time afterwards another Angoumois gentleman, François de Bouteville, expiated on the scaffold the crime of having infringed this law.

The duel between François de Vivonne, seigneur de Jarnac, and Guy Chabot, seigneur de Chataigneraie, took place on the tenth of July, in the park of St. Germain-en-Laye, in the presence of the king, the constable Montmorenci, and a great assemblage of the most celebrated knights of that day. When the ancient chateau of St. Même, situated a little to the south of Jarnac, was demolished in 1801, the following papers, containing a detailed account of the combat, and copies of all the documents relating to it, and the authorization of it by the crown, were discovered. Although they are somewhat lengthy, I have thought them too interesting to be abridged. They give a complete, minute, and unquestionably authentic account of the forms, ceremonies, and mode of conducting these affairs, of which we read so much; and as such cannot but be acceptable to the antiquarian and student of past manners and medieval civilization.

“ Le combat des seigneurs de Jarnac et de La Chataigneraye.

“ Deux gentilshommes françois, Guy-Chabot et Jean de Vivonne, tous deux du pays d’Angoumois, et de maison illustre et ancienne; Guy-Chabot, fils de Charles, seigneur de Montlieu, Saint-Aubin, que le Roy François, premier du nom, appela *Guichot*, par la particulière affection qu’il lui portoit, et les autres appeloient quelquefois sieur de Montlieu, et souvent sieur de Jarnac, comme fils assuré de leur ancienne maison, de long-temps fortifiée par sanguinité ou par alliance des plus grandes et illustres maisons, familles de France, d’Italie, de Flandre et d’Allemagne: il eut ses prédécesseurs et devanciers en directe et descendance et du mesme susdit nom de Chabot Febran et Adrien, neveux de l’Empereur

d'Allemagne, frère et enfant de Feri-Chabot, et Adrienne, sa femme, les envoya au service de Clovis, cinquième Roy de France, premier Roy chrétien. Febran-Chabot fils, ayant espousé Radégonde, fille de France, eut Philippe Chabot, qui fut marié avecque Marguerite de la Marche, seule fille héritière, et d'isceux naquirent Brieu et Hugues-Chabot.

“ Brieu eut pour femme Jeanne, fille du Comte de Mêneau, qui enfanta Tristan-Chabot et austres enfants ; et Tristan fut marié avecque Magdeleine d'Angoulesme, qui eut Gudic, qui espousa Bonne, fille du Comte de Blois ; duquel mariage est issu Pierre-Chabot, qui fut Connestable ; eut d'Isabeau, fille du Comte de Nion, sa femme, Vincent, Alban et Roulet, et trois filles, comme après, du mariage d'Alban-Chabot avecque Jeanne, fille du Comte de Périgord, est venu Ollivier-Chabot qui espousa Anne, fille du Comte de la cité de Chartres, qui enfanta Boniface-Chabot, et Boniface-Chabot espousa Agnès, fille du Comte de Poitou ; d'isceux venus Antoine-Chabot et deux filles, et de lui est venu Eustache-Chabot, qui fut marié avecque Pernelle de Lusignan, qui enfanta Bouchet-Chabot ; et Bouchet-Chabot espousa Jeanne de Méliner ; d'isceux naquit Guillaume-Chabot, qui fut marié avecque Rollane, fille aînée du Comte de Flandre, qui eut Guillaume-Chabot, lequel fut marié avecque Jeanne de Chinon, qui eurent Renauld et Elisabeth, et Renauld-Chabot, Comte de Jarnac, qui fut grand et vaillant capitaine, et qui fit mortelle guerre aux Anglois du tems de Sorie, Comte d'Anjou*

Toutefois, il est notoire qu'elle a esté des plus grandes et des plus illustres de l'Europe, que d'iscelle sont issus quatre Empereurs. Madeleine de Luxembourg et de Jacques-Chabot,

* Ici nous avons dû laisser subsister une lacune dans la généalogie des Chabot, l'auteur du manuscrit s'étant laissé entrainer à des erreurs de nature à compromettre la gravité de l'histoire et la vérité des faits.—
(*Note de l'éditeur.*)

sieur de Brion, et Bunesay, puîné à Charles, qui fut grand Amiral de France, lequel Amiral a laissé les Comtes de Charni et de Brion, et François-Chabot, dame de Barbezieux ; sa fille Madeleine eut dudict Jacques-Chabot Catherine-Chabot, qui espousa Berthaut d'Estitut ; et Charles-Chabot, fils aîné, fut marié avecque Jeanne de St.-Aulay, dame de Montlieu, et Saint-Aulay, dont issurent Louis-Chabot, qui mourut jeune, après le voyage qu'il fit avecque le sieur Lautrec, et Guy-Chabot, duquel est question, qui espousa en premières noces Louise de Puiseler, de la maison d'Hely, en Picardie. D'isceux issus Edouard et Charles Chabot, sieurs de Montlieu et Saint-Aulay ; comme Edouard-Chabot, du mariage de Durefort, de la maison de Duras, est venu austre Guy-Chabot, et austres enfants. Après la mort de la quelle Saint-Aulay, Charles-Chabot espousa en secondes noces Madeleine de Puignien, dame vertueuse, qui avoit esté eslevée avecque Marguerite de Valois, sœur unique du Roy, nommée la *Vraie Marguerite*, pour l'union de la France, et de ce mariage seroit né austre Charles-Chabot, sieur de S^{te}-Foy, et Jeanne-Chabot, qui fut mariée avecque le sieur de Châteauneuf, en Limousin, et de Charles-Chabot, sieur de S^{te}-Foy, et, Jeanne Joubert, est venu austre Chabot de S^{te}-Foy.

“ Et François de Vivone estoit puîné de la maison d'Anville, et lui et Charles, son frère, estoient fils d'André de Vivone, grand seneschal du Poitou, lequel par la grande autorité et crédit qu'avoit le Roy en lui, dispoit des estats et offices royaux, et mesme en donnoit les promotions qui estoient dehors ; avoit grande famille illustre, ancienne et de la maison de Bretagne. Pourquoi ceux de Vivone portent encore les hommes en leurs armes, et combien que Charles eût eu La Chataigneraye et austres terres pour son partage, et Jean eut, en Ardelaix et austres lieux, sans prendre austre chose à La Chataigneraye, seroit recognu, honoré et craint, tant par sa faveur, qu'il avoit du Roy Henry, de ses naturelles benoits et perfections, riche

stature de corps, que pour son cœur généreux et assuré, dextérité, expérience aux armes, et courage entre les plus vaillants admirables.

“ Ces deux gentilshommes, de mesme pays et voisins, presque d’âge égal, nourris à la cour du Roy François premier, logés long-tems ensemble, ayant assez de convenance de mœurs, et qui s’estoient unis et liés d’estroite amitié, continuant de lit, dès lors qu’ils avoient esté nourris, et fait ensemble la guerre pour le service du Roy ; outre qu’ils estoient alliés par le mariage d’une fille de Jarnac, grande tante de Guy-Chabot, avecque l’aïeul de François de Vivone, exerçant si long-tems les offices de leur amitié, qu’elle engendra, fit naître envie et haine au cœur de plusieurs qui n’oublioient pas de chercher tous moyens pour détruire cette union ; et sans avoir égard à la conséquence, il advint d’y mettre fin au jeune Jarnac, qu’il s’estoit vanté à La Chataigneraye d’avoir couché avecque sa belle-mère, et l’avoir *chevauchée*, estant avecque lui. Lors ces propos, qui estoient un moyen pour parvenir au combat, n’y ayant aulcune preuve que les armes, et combien que les maisons offensées de tels malheurs. Ceux qui ont le plus d’intérêt sont les derniers avertis, le contraire est ici observé ; car Charles-Chabot, père de Guy, est le premier auquel on fit le conte, parce qu’on ne regardoit qu’arriver aux fins de quelques périls et ravissement d’honneur, et ce fut pour raison de tels propos que Charles-Chabot, ne montrant à son fils au retour de l’accort et un cœur accoustomé de père ; mais lui faisant connoître qu’il avoit quelque desplaisir en son cœur, après plusieurs requestes de son fils, lui demanda s’il s’estoit jacté, comme l’on disoit, de sa belle-mère ; ce qui toucha si vivement le cœur de son fils, que la tristesse et le desplaisir ayant rompu son discours, il respondit, qu’aux dépends de sa vie, ou de celle de La Chataigneraye, il monstreroit son innocence, disant qu’il l’assuroit tant de sa justification, bien que Dieu estoit son témoing et son juge, qu’il feroit sentir

à La Chataigneraye le mérite de son imposture : et soudain partit son dict père pour aller en cour, avecque protestation de ne retourner qu'il n'eust poursuivi cette affaire à chef, et qu'il ne fust justifié de cette calomnie ; et de fait, à la première occasion, publiquement qu'il se seroit vanté avoir couché avecque sa belle-mère, estoit méchant, malhonneste et avoit menti. Parlant d'ailleurs, si devant quelles parolles s'adressoient à La Chataigneraye, lequel, averti du desmenti, et voyant l'occasion honnette pour combattre le jeune Jarnac, sieur de Montlieu, sur lequel il s'assuroit estre victorieux, se confiant en sa dextérité et son expérience aux armes, jà deslibéroit de triompher. Il poursuit l'octroi du combat à toute outrance, et se pourvoit par-devant le Roy François, sur la fin de son règne, comme pareillement le jeune Jarnac ; et la chose mise en délibération auprès du Conseil, bien que plusieurs apportassent diverses opinions, celle du Roy de défendre le combat par plusieurs belles et grandes raisons, qu'il a requis de convenant sur cette proposition, qu'un Prince ne doit permettre chose de l'issue de laquelle on ne peut espérer bien, comme un tel combat. Tellement que durant le vivant du Roy, ce dict différend fut sursis ; mais soudain qu'il fust décédé, au mesme an 1547, et que le Roy Henry, second du nom, son fils, eust succédé à la couronne de France, La Chataigneraye et Jarnac, retournant sur les premières brisées, pour parvenir au combat, La Chataigneraye escrit un cartel au Roy, dont le contenu, avec la suscription, en suit.

“ Au Roy, mon souverain seigneur.

“ ‘ Sire, ayant entendu que Guichot a esté dernier à compagnie, où il a dict que quiconque auroit dict qu'il s'estoit vanté d'avoir couché avecque sa belle mère estoit méchant et malheureux ; sur quoy, Sire, avecque votre bon vouloir et plaisir, je responds qu'il a méchamment menti et mentira toutes fois et quantes il dira que j'ai dict ladicte chose, comme

soit véritable, mais dicte ; car il m'a dict plusieurs fois et s'est vanté d'avoir couché avecque sa belle-mère.

“ ‘ *Signé* FRANÇOIS VIVONE.’

“ Duquel cartel le bruit commençant à courir, et La Chataigneraye se voyant blasmé de toucher l'honneur des dames, et mesme d'une qu'on honoroit, primoit par ses vertus entre celles qui n'estoient de petite recommandation, il escrit au Roy un auste cartel, pour sa justification.

“ ‘ Sire, au différend qui est entre Guichot-Chabot et moi, jusqu'à présent j'ai seulement regardé à la conservation de mon honneur, sans toucher à l'honneur des dames, desquelles j'aimerois plutost estre défenseur qu'accusateur, mesme celle dont est question en mon différend ; mais voyant que, pour ma justification, il est bien requis que je dis, que ledict Chabot a fait de sa belle-mère sa volonté, sans regarder à l'honneur de son père et de son devoir, et qu'il a dict avoir couché avecque elle ; et pour ce, je vous supplie très-humblement de me donner champ à toute outrance, dedans lequel j'entends prover par armes audict Guichot ce que j'ai dict ; et aussy qu'il vous plaise me permettre que je lui puisse envoyer celles du combat, avecque le contenu de la présente, que je lui veux tenir sur ce que dessus, afin que, par nos mains, puisqu'il ne se peut prover austrement, soit vérifié toute l'offense qu'il a faite à Dieu, à son père et à justice.

“ ‘ *Signé* FRANÇOIS VIVONE.’

“ Sur l'envoi desquels cartels, le seigneur de Jarnac estant instruit en cour qu'il eust donné le premier le démenti, pourquoy La Chataigneraye le poursuivoit comme demandant et assaillant, qu'il a de mesme, et le jeune Jarnac défendant et soustenant : Jarnac escrit ce cartel au Roy, avecque cette suscription :

“ ‘ *Au Roy, mon seigneur.*

“ ‘ Sire, avecque vostre bon plaisir est que je dis que François de Vivone a menti de l'imputation qu'il m'a donnée, de laquelle je vous parlerai à compagnie et austre, qu'il a menti de la seconde imputation qu'il m'a faite du premier escrit qu'il vous a présenté, et davantage qu'il a méchamment et malheureusement mérité de la tierce ordre et infâme imputation qu'il m'a faite par le second escrit qu'il vous a présenté. Et pour ce, Sire, je vous supplie qu'il vous plaise lui octroyer le camp à toute ouurance à quant et quant. Ayant vous premièrement déclaré de laquelle des trois imputations ledict Vivone est tenu de me prendre, s'il est quitte de la première imputation par la seconde, et de la seconde quitte par la tierce.

“ ‘ *Signé GUY-CHABOT.*'

“ Outre ledict cartel, Guy-Chabot envoya cettre lettre à monsieur l'évesque de Béziers, qu'estoit près de la personne du Roy et de ses favoris :

“ ‘ Monsieur, la signature de cette lettre vous fera croire et dire en assurance, partout où vous vous trouverez, que touchant les différends entre La Chataigneraye et moi, s'il plaist au Roy nous donner lieu en un coin de son royaume, pour vider nos différends par armes, je les porterai si braves, et moi encore plus, que montreroi dedans le lendemain au combat la bonne nourriture que j'ai cue du feu Roy, et que je tiens du Roy mon seigneur, et que La Chataigneraye n'a la bouche si forte que je ne l'arreste dans lien de fer.'

“ Le cartel signifié, et la lettre escrite lui ayant esté montrée, il envoya incontinent au Roy cet austre cartel :

“ ‘ Sire, il vous a plu, par ci-devant, entendre les différends entre Guy-Chabot et moi, sur lequel j'ai reçu celui signé de son nom, par où il offre d'entrer demain dans le camp, et

porter des armes si braves et lui encore plus, qu'on connoistra la nourriture qu'il a reçue du feu Roy et de vous, se vantant de m'arrester d'un lien de fer ; et pour ce, Sire, qu'il montreroit au point que toujours j'ai pourchassé. Je vous supplie très-humblement qu'il vous plaise de donner camp, en endroit de vostre royaume, à toute outrance, pour combattre nos différends, ou permission de l'appeler en auste part.'

“ ‘ *Signé* DE VIVONE.’ ”

“ Ce placet devant conseil près du Roy estant ce qu'il s'en suit escrit au pied du placet :

“ ‘ Il a esté ordonné que cette présente sera montrée et signifiée audict Chabot par un hérault d'armes du Roy, pour à iscelle respondre, ou dire ce que bon lui semblera. Au conseil privé du Roy, tenu à l'Isle-Adam, 24 avril 1547.

“ ‘ *Signé* DE L'AUBESPINE.’ ”

“ Tout soudain l'expédition faite du placet, le tout fut fait à la diligence, poursuite et sollicitation du sieur de La Chaigneraye, entre les mains de Guiene, hérault d'armes du Roy, pour estre signifié au sieur de Jarnac, ce qui fut fait avecque le procès-verbal.

“ ‘ Le jour de S^t-Marc, 25 avril 1547, en vertu de l'ordonnance ci-dessus transcrite au pied du placet présenté au Roy par Jean de Vivone contre Guy-Chabot, touchant le différend d'honneur entr'eux, moi Guiene, hérault d'armes dudict sieur à la requeste dudict Vivone, suis parti d'auprès d'Isle-Adam, où estoit iscelui, pour trouver au lieu de Limour ledict Chabot, afin de lui faire signifier et faire entendre le contenu au placet et ordonnance, et pour ce faire, passant par le village de S^t-Cloud, qui estoit mon chemin pour parvenir à Limours. Ayant entendu que ledict sieur Chabot y estoit arrivé et séjourné jusque sur les quatre heures après midi dudict jour ; attendant iscelui Chabot, sur lesquelles, voyant que ledict Chabot ne

venoit point, que l'heure, pour parvenir, à Limours, se passoit, je suis parti de S^t-Cloud, et accompagné d'un mieu compagnon, appelé Bourgogne, suis parvenu avecque lui audict lieu de Limours, environ sur les six heures du soir; duquel lieu estant entré en la cour du château, où, après m'estre adressé à une femme que j'avois rencontrée dans ladicte cour pour sçavoir si ledict Chabot estoit audict lieu, et pour n'y avoir pu rien sçavoir d'isceux, me suis finalement adressé au sieur Dupin, enfant de Mme. la Duchesse, lequel j'ai supplié me dire si ledict Chabot estoit au château, et de me faire parler à lui; lequel m'a fait response qu'il n'y estoit pas, mais que mademoiselle de Jarnac, sa femme, y estoit bien, me disant encore si je ne venois pas pour le cartel; à quoy j'ai fait response que j'avois à faire entendre audict Chabot chose qu'il lui importoit; que je voudrois parvenir à sa connoissance ou avoir pour lui faire et entendre, si je ne pouvois parler à lui. A l'instant desquels propos seroient survenus plusieurs gentils-hommes et austres de ladicte maison, et par spécial, l'un nommé Grellier, et un nommé Deville, lesquels, ayant entendu que je venois pour trouver ledict Chabot, m'ont aussy dict et fait response qu'il n'y estoit pas, ni personne de ses gens: disant, l'un d'isceux, qu'il estoit parti l'avant jourd'hui pour aller à la cour et audict S^t-Cloud, voir la compagnie qui y estoit; me demandant, ledict Deville, si je voulois pas bien montrer ce que j'avois à signifier audict Chabot, et en donner copie; ce que j'ai accordé tellement, qu'ils ont tous entendu la cause de ma venue audict lieu, par la lecture faite dudict placet et ordonnance, comme dict est. En intention qu'il pourroit parvenir aincy à la connoissance dudict Chabot, et ai baillé audict Deville une copie; ce que voyant, ledict sieur à ce que je faudisse que par pareille copie donnée audict Deville qui l'y parvienne aucune connoissance audict Chabot, et que ce n'estoit pas son domicile que ledict Limours, à quoy ne lui ai fait aucune response, sinon que je les appellois à témoins que

le faisois pendant l'expédition de ma dicte charge, et ai fait sans en tenir aucun propos, ai pris tous deux pour les retourner à la cour dudict sieur Roy, pour rendre ce compte d'iscelle, selon et aincy qu'il est contenu ci-dessus. Toutes lesquelles choses aincy par moi faites et exploitées en présence dudict Bourgogne, hérault d'armes dudict sieur, je certifie estre vrai et avoir esté par moi aincy faites les jour et an que dessus.

“ ‘ *Signé* GUIENE.’ ”

“ ‘ Et le 27 dudict mois, moi, hérault d'armes, estant averti que ledict sieur Chabot estoit au lieu de Saint-Cloud, me suis de rechef transporté audict lieu, sur l'heure de huit heures du matin, où j'ai trouvé iscelui Chabot à l'issue de son logis, auquel, en la présence d'Anguien, compagnon, hérault du titre d'Orléans, et avoir présenté mesme adresse audict Chabot, et parlant à sa personne, lui ai dict et fait entendre que j'avois charge expresse de lui monstrier et signifier certain placet présenté audict sieur Roy par Jean de Vivone, touchant le différend d'honneur venu entr'eux ; il m'a dict que j'estois le très-bien venu, et que je fisse ce qui m'estoit commandé de la part du Roy ou de son conseil ; et à l'instant, tenant ledict placet et ordonnance. dans ma main, après lui en avoir fait lecture ensemble de ce placet, et la diligence que j'avois faite, ci-dessus mentionnée, lui ai signifié lesdicts placet et ordonnance, pour à isceux faire response, et dire ce que bon lui semble ; à quoy ledict Chabot m'a dict et respondu, que comme le très-humble et très-obéissant serviteur du Roy, son souverain et naturel seigneur, il délibéreroit son entier exprès avecque lui, pour après avoir reçu cette response qu'il devoit en cette affaire, afin de satisfaire à son honneur et devoir, à contentement et voulonté dudict sieur, auquel il estoit bien affectionné et obligé. Semblablement qu'à l'intention de ses prédécesseurs, il ne voudroit pas faire moins pour son seigneur que s'il employoit non seulement ses biens, aussy sa personne

et aussy son cœur ; que pour son honneur, en seroit ce qui plairoit au créateur en quelque sorte que ce fût lui commander, en désirant toujours faire reconnoître l'honneur et nourriture qu'il a recus du feu Roy, son père, et de lui, jusques à la dernière goutte de son sang et de sa vie ; qu'il n'épargneroit rien pour faire le devoir d'homme de bien. Et, est la volonté dudict sieur, qu'il desiroit sur toute chose accomplir ; ce dict et fait, après avoir mis et rédigé par escrit ce que dict est, et la response aincy à moi faite, fait lecture à la requeste dudict Chabot, en présence des sieurs de Changery, Laroche, Pouzay, Fontenelle, maistre-d'hostel dudict feu Roy, et de plusieurs austres, j'ai ensemble laissé placet, ordonnance, exploit, diligence faite audict lieu de Limours pour trouver ledict Chabot, toutes les copies, selon et aincy qu'elles sont ci-dessus transcrites, et lesquelles je certifie estre vraies, et aincy par moi estre faites, lesdicts jour et an que dessus.

“ ‘ *Signé* GUIENE.’ ”

“ Le procès-verbal est rapporté au conseil privé du Roy. Sa Majesté scéante iscelui à S^t-Germain-en-Laye, où assistaient plusieurs Princes, les sieurs Connestable, maréchaux de France, et austres seigneurs et capitaines, non sans advisement de la précédente response du sieur de Jarnac, laquelle lue, aulcun du conseil invitoit à l'octroi du combat ; mais le Roy, qui toujours avoit favorisé La Chataigneraye, fort de l'opinion de ceux qui y à les faire combattre ; tellement qu'il fut arrêté que les formes des patentes de camp seroient expédiées, ce qui fut fait comme s'en suit.

“ ‘ Henry, par le grâce de Dieu, Roy de France, à tous ceux qui ces présentes verront, salut.

“ ‘ Comme ci-devant, Jean de Vivone, seigneur de La Chataigneraye, et Guy-Chabot, sieur de Montlieu, seroient entrés en différend sur certaines paroles importantes et touchant

grandement l'honneur de l'un et de l'austre ; lequel différend esté, par ordonnance, mis en délibération devant les Princes estant près de ma personne, et nos très-chers et très-amés cousins, les sieurs de Montmorency, Connestable, les sieurs de Sedan et Saint-André, maréchaux de France, et austres seigneurs, chevaliers, capitaines, et grands personnages, estant en mes suits, pour la justification de son honneur : lesquels, après avoir tout considéré, nous ont fait entendre que la cause et le différend estoient hors de preuve, au moyen de quoy la vérité n'en peut être sans l'innocence d'un d'eux justifié de son honneur par les armes. Sçavoir faisons, que nous sommes protecteur des gentilshommes de nostre royaume ; désirant, pour cette cause, que les advertissements dudict différend soyent entendus à la décharge d'iscelui d'entr'eux qu'il appartiendra ; et après avoir pris sur ce l'avis et conseil desdicts Princes et personnes âgées ci-dessus, avons permis et octroyé, permettons et octroyons par ces présentes, voulons, et nous plaist, pour vider entre ledict sieur de Vivone, comme attaquant sur le différend, que dans quarante jours de la signification de ces présentes, ils se tiennent en personne là partout où nous serons, pour là, en nostre présence où d'isceux qu'à ce faire commettre, et se combattent l'un et l'austre à toute outrance, en champ clos ; et de faire preuve de leurs personnes, l'un en monstre de l'austre pour la satisfaction d'iscelui auquel la victoire demeurera, sous peine d'estre représenté non noble, lui et sa postérité, à jamais privé de droits prédominants, privileges et prérogatives dont jouissent et ont accoustumé jouir les nobles de nostre royaume. Mes présentes permission, vouloir et intention ils entretiennent, gardant et observant, faisant garder, entretenir et observer de point en point, sans aulcunement les frauder ; car s'il est nostre plaisir : en témoignage de ce, nous avons signé ces présentes de nostre main, et à iscelles fait mettre et apposer nostre secl.

“ ‘ Donné à St-Germain-en-Laye, le 21^e jour de juin 1547, et de nostre règne le premier.

“ ‘ *Signé HENRY.*’

“ Et sur le repli :

“ ‘ Par le Roy,

“ ‘ DE L’AUBESPINE.’

“ ‘ Suivant le mandement contenu dans cette présente et iscelle délivrées à Bretagne, hérault d’armes de France, il m’a fait la signification au sieur de Jarnac et de La Chataigneraye, joint le procès-verbal de lundi 23^e jour de juin 1547. En vertu de la patente de camp attachée à moi Bretagne, hérault-d’armes de France, présent pour signifier, aincy qu’il m’est mandé, au sieur de La Chataigneraye et à Guy-Chabot, sieur de Montlieu. Donné à St-Germain, le 21^e jour de ce mois, estant signé de la main du Roy, et contre-signé sur le repli : *par le Roy, DE L’AUBESPINE* ; et scellée en placard de cire rouge du scel de France ; me suis transporté à la rue St-Honoré, où j’ai trouvé le sieur de Montlieu en son logis, accompagné des capitaines Cese, Giroges, de Ben, Regnaud, d’André-Clauzau, de Cosnac, auquel, en la présence d’isceux, en parlant à sa personne, lui ai signifié et lu ces présentes mot-à-mot, suivant le contenu mentionné en iscelles ; et après lecture faite, et par lui entendue, m’a demandé : *avez-vous d’austre chose à me dire ?* A mesme instant lui ai baillé et délaissé un cartel et fait lecture d’iscelui à moi baillé par Jean de Vivone, sieur de La Chataigneraye, qui m’avoit pris et requis bailler audict Chabot, et qu’il n’entendoit plus d’y bailler dans cette affaire. Bien entendu par ledict Chabot, m’a fait response : *Je remercie le Roy très-humblement de l’honneur qu’il lui plaist me faire, s’il faut que par une tierce personne presvenu il ait esté, j’ai présenté à Sa Majesté austre chose qui a déshonneur d’un homme de bien, ce dont je me justifierai, ni épargnerai ma vie ; acceptant la patente et le cartel*

du bon plaisir du Roy, avecque intention de ne mettre en rien préjudice à mes droits et choses de querelles. Et ai fait, lu et baillé copie de la patente, tant l'original que le cartel, en cette présente signification, laquelle, et tout ce que dessus je certifié au Roy, mon souverain seigneur, à messieurs les Princes, messieurs les Connestable, Mareschaux de France, et austres à qui il appartiendra, avoir aincy par moi esté faite en présence du hérault-d'armes de Picardie, Jean d'Encaile, Clause-Moré-gie, et Guillaume de Costou, les jour et an que dessus.

“ ‘ *Signé* BRETAGNE.’

“ Et n'ayant ledict hérault donné l'original, ni les copies mentionnées ci-dessus, y retourne pour cet effet comme il appert.

“ ‘ Et le lendemain, jour de mardi, en suivant à une heure après midi, me suis transporté par devant le sieur de Montlieu, auquel j'ai baillé et délaissé l'original du cartel, et copie des patentes ci-dessus mentionnées; ensemble mon procès-verbal que le jour d'hier lui avois signifié, et iscelles pièces rapportées pour en faire des copies; ensemble mon procès-verbal pour lui servir et valoir, lequel sieur de Montlieu m'a respondu et fait contestation que le tems ne courroit que de cette présente heure et jour.

“ ‘ Fait audict jour et an comme dessus.

“ ‘ *Signé* BRETAGNE.’

“ ‘ *Le cartel envoyé par La Chataigneraye à Jarnac, lors de la signification des présentes.*

“ ‘ Guy-Chabot, je vous envoie la patente du camp qu'il a plu au Roy nous octroyer, dedans lequel je veux vous prover avecque les armes offensives que vous me baillerez, mais qu'elles soyent d'un gentilhomme d'honneur, que vous m'avez dict que vous avez couché avecque vostre belle-mère; j'entends que vous me fassiez sçavoir, dans quatre jours, à Paris, aux Tournelles, où je serai, ou tout austre pour moi, de quoy je me

dois pourvoir, en témoing de quoy la présente de ma main, en présence de Monseigneur soussigné, le 12 juin 1547.

“ Et plus bas est escrit : ‘ certifié ce que dessus estre vrai, nous François de Lorraine, ayant esté présent à ce que dessus.’

“ Le sieur de Jarnac, qui n’attendoit que l’opportunité de faire ce qui est d’un défendeur, soutenant qu’il avoit expressément option, exercice aux armes pour combattre à pied ou à cheval, estant à lui d’en faire élection et forme, comme à l’assaillant de choisir le camp ; il fait cette liste des armes qu’il envoya par Bretagne, hérault d’armes du Roy, à La Chataigneraye.

“ ‘ Jean Vivone, pourvoyez-vous des armes que devez porter au jour qui sera député.’

“ ‘ 1°. Pourvoyez-vous d’un coursier, d’un *turc*, d’un *genet* et d’un courtauld.

“ ‘ Item, pour armes de vostre coursier, d’une scelle de guerre, d’une scelle de joute, et d’une scelle qui soit à deux doigts de haut et l’arçon de devant ; mais qu’elle ait deux bourrelets derrière, et d’une scelle qui n’ait point d’arçon derrière.

“ ‘ Item, que les deux chevaux soyent fournis des scelles spécifiées comme l’on dit au davantage, une scelle à la *genette* et une à la *cacimard*, et le *turc* ; une scelle à la *turquoise* et une scelle à la *françoise*, avecque deux doigts d’arçon derrière, et l’arçon bas devant.

“ ‘ Item, que le courtauld ait davantage une scelle à la *françoise* et une aistre scelle sans arçon derrière et sans *banches* derrière ; mais l’arçon devant avecque la recontre à demi-cuisse.

“ ‘ Item, que les diets chevaux se puissent armer avecque bardes d’armes de toutes pièces, comme *chamfrein* de fer, poitrine de fer, *foucart* de courpieds de fer, un *chamfrein* atourné de fer.

“ ‘ Item, que pour les quatre chevaux soyent pourvus d’armes

de toutes pièces d'acier et de bardes, de cuir et de caparaçon de maille, et les reiniers couverts de lames, et les mettre en point comme si vouliez entrer au jour d'une bataille, et vous en pourvoyant avecque telles armes que vous pourrez combattre en jousté.

“ ‘ Item, vous pourvoyez pour vous armes de toutes les pièces qu'il faut armer un homme d'armes, aux pièces doubles et simples des jointes et sans jointes.

“ ‘ Item, d'un harnais à la lègue de toutes pièces.

“ ‘ Item, de toutes sortes d'armes de maille qui se peuvent porter.

“ ‘ Item, d'une épée, d'une salade à la *gonette*.

“ ‘ Item, d'un *targle* à l'*albanoise* et du bouclier étargé, de toutes sortes que l'on se puisse aider à pied et à cheval.

“ ‘ Item, de toutes sortes de gants de fer, de maille, de lames d'acier.

“ ‘ Tant des doigts que du demeurant de la main, de prise et sans prise.

“ ‘ Item, de vos armes, vous et vos chevaux, de toutes sortes de façons qu'il est possible qui sont accoustumées en guerre, jousté, en débat et en champ clos.

“ ‘ Item, des armes qui ne sont accoustumées en guerre, en jousté, en débat et en champ clos. Je les porterai toujours pour vous et pour moi, me réservant toujours de croistre ou diminuer, de clouer ou desclouer, d'oster ou mettre dedans le camp à mon plaisir, ou de mettre et chemise, ou mains, selon qu'il me semblera. Fait à Paris, le 16^o jour de juin, l'an 1547.

“ ‘ Ainsi Signé GUY CHABOT.’

“ Le hérault signifie cette liste avecque le procès verbal.

“ ‘ Aujourd'hui 16 juin 1547, estant en la ville de Paris, à la requeste de Chabot, sieur de Montlieu, je Guiene, hérault d'armes du Roy, me suis transporté par devant et à la personne

de Jean de Vivone, sieur de La Chataigneraye, lequel j'ai trouvé en la rue St. Antoine, en la maison Simone des Ruches, veuve de feu Jean Després, valet de chambre, en son vivant, du défunt Roy, environ les sept heures du soir, avant le soleil couché, auquel j'ai baillé les articles signés dudict Chabot, dont copie est ci-dessus contenue, et collationnée par moi au propre original, suit et entre où est détail ce dont ledict Vivone se doit pourvoir, au jour député pour combattre de différend entr'eux, ainsy qu'il a esté ordonné par le Roy; lequel Vivone m'a fait response de ses droits; il accepte le contenu des articles ci-dessus transcrits, desquels lui en ai fait lecture, ce, mot-à-mot, en présence de monseigneur, Baron de Courton, et plusieurs austres gentilshommes, et spécialement de Guillaume Payen et Jean Trouvé, notaires royaux, à Paris. Fait les jour et an que dessus, par moi hérault susdict Guiene, et lecture faite de la liste, La Chataigneraye dict: *il veut combattre mon esprit et ma bourse!*

“Après ce que dessus, et l'insinuation faite à l'assaillant et à l'assailli, suivant les patentes de camp pour combattre le quatrième jour. Après la signification desquels iscelui estant jà expiré, restoit à prendre et à s'accorder austre jour, ce qui fut fait au 10^e juillet prochain. En ayant donc averti Charles Chabot, père de Guy, et en sa résolution de son fils, monstrant qu'il avoit plus son honneur en recommandation que sa propre vie, dit a un de ses amis: ‘Que son fils aîné n'eût pas accepté le combat; que sans avoir égard à son âge, lui-mesme eût combattu sur cette juste querelle.’ Ce qui augmenta encore le courage du jeune Jarnac, qui ne fait faute, comme aussy La Chataigneraye, assaillant, monsieur le Connestable d'Aumale et le jeune Jarnac, assailli, monsieur de Boissy, grand escuyer, au lieu de St. Germain en Laye, où le Roy estoit, et le camp dressé près du Parc, suivant l'ordre qu'il avoit esté avisé pour le combat par messeigneurs les Connestable, Mareschaux et Amiral de France, qui estoient avecque le Roy, qui ordonna

qu'il seroit ouvert aux deux combattants dudict camp pour les héraults d'armes, au matin, sur le soleil levant, en présence de tous les assistants, ce qui s'ensuit.

“ ‘ Aujourd'hui dixième de ce présent mois de juillet, le Roy, mon souverain seigneur, a permis et octroyé le camp libre pour à toute outrance à Jean Vivone, sieur de La Chaigneraye, assaillant, et à Guy Chabot, sieur de Montlieu, défendant d'honneur, dont entr'eux est question : par quoy je fais sçavoir à tous et pour ceci qu'il n'ait à empêcher l'effet du présent combat, n'aide ou nuise à l'un ou à l'austre des combattants, sous peine de la vie.’

“ Le ban et publication faits par le hérault Guiene, les apprêts faits, advint l'assaillant de son logis, qui auroit esté conduit par son parrain et ceux de sa compagnie de trois cents hommes accoustrés de ses couleurs, qui estoient blanc et incarnat, jusqu'au camp, trompettes et tambouriers sonnans ; lequel, après avoir honoré iscelui camp par dehors, avoit esté rendre, en son pavillon fait et dressé près la porte par où il devoit entrer, qui estoit au côté droit, duquel il ne seroit parti jusqu'à ce qu'il entrât au camp.

“ C'est après avoir esté aussy avertir l'assailli, ou défendant, par son parrain et ceux de sa compagnie qui estoient de six vingts hommes accoustrés de blanc et noir ; après avoir aussy honoré le camp, pour le dehors, avoit esté advenu en son pavillon dont il ne seroit semblablement sorti, jusqu'à son entrée dans le camp ; et est ce fait avoir esté procédé par leurs parrains et leurs confidents à l'accord du camp, des armes défensives, et du confident qui seroit baillé d'une part et d'austre pour diviser avecque chacun des combattants de la manière qui s'ensuit. Sur l'heure de six heures du matin, en présence de messieurs les Connestable et Mareschaux, et des héraults d'armes, fut accordé par les parrains, et sitôt qu'il estoit sans croître ni diminuer et du surplus qu'il seroit

procédé à l'accord des armes, en faisant apparôître en procuration.

“ C'est après le camp accordé, fut fourni des procurations expresses en cas qui auroit esté restant par chacun des parrains et prises aux greffes par devant les héraults, l'un desquels parrains, à sçavoir monsieur d'Aumale, fut requis de procéder à l'accordement des armes ; ce qui fut fait et y procédant en premier lieu, fut accordé que s'il se romproit des armes offensives : quant aux épées, il leur en seroit baillé une seulement.

“ Ce fait avoit esté fourni par le sieur d'Aumale, et confident pour le sieur de La Chataigneraye, des sieurs Sarclat, Montluc, et du Comte de Brissac.

“ Les confidents de la part du sieur grand escuyer avoient esté fournis par le sieur de Montlieu ; les sieurs de Chenaud, Chatelneau seroient allés au pavillon de chacun des combattants.

“ Et venant sur les sept heures et demie, seigneur Comte d'Aumale protesta, en la présence des sieurs Connestable et Mareschaux et des héraults d'armes de France, que le tems d'apporter des armes pour en accorder fût au préjudice du sieur de Montlieu, qu'il a son intérêt, attendu qu'il estoit tenu de procéder à cet accord.

“ Et tôt après, fut apporté par le sieur Bruimareilh, accompagné de sieurs Baron de Lagarde, de St. Julien, trompettes et tambouriers sonnans, une cotte de maille pardevant l'échafaud du Roy, desdicts sieurs Connestable et Mareschaux, laquelle fut accordée et acceptée par ledict sieur d'Aumale, qui visite, et laquelle fut mesurée, et une austre par le sieur d'Aumale, pour servir à La Chataigneraye.

“ Et après, fut apporté audict lieu, en mesme présence, par le sieur de Lavauguyon, accompagné des sieurs Baron de Lagarde, et St. Julien, un gantelet de fer pour la main droite, qui fut accordé et accepté par le sieur d'Aumale, sans préjudice

des armes non visitées, sans estre rendu de semblables pour lui. Comme il voit que la perte du tems qui pouvoit estre faite en discords qui fût au préjudice dudict sieur de Montlieu, comme il en auroit toujours protesté : iscelle présentation et protestation faites sur dix heures du matin auquel respondit le sieur de Lagarde, dit qu'il restoit encore six heures du jour au sieur de Jarnac, après qu'il auroit eu la victoire sur son ennemi.

“ Et après, fut apporté au mesme lieu, en présence des susdicts, par les sieurs de Brion et de Lévis, accompagnés du sieur d'Ourse, Baron de Lagarde, et de St. Julien, deux brassards pour le bras gauche, et isceux présentés audict sieur d'Aumale, pour prendre celui qui lui plairoit pour servir à La Chataigneraye ; lequel sieur d'Aumale visita et remontra eux sieurs Connestable et Mareschaux, s'appuyant sur la protestation par lui faite, à quoy, de la part des sieurs d'Ourse, de Lagarde et St. Julien, fut respondu et soutenu au contraire, en disant que c'étoit armes usitées : et encore qu'elles ne le fussent, il ne pouvoit eu devoit les refuser, sur quoy lesdicts brassards furent mis ès mains desdicts sieurs Connestable et Mareschaux pour en juger, et après avoir esté vus par eux, la liste des articles envoyés par le sieur de Montlieu audict de La Chataigneraye pour le pourvoir des armes offensives, auroient ordonné que ledict d'Aumale les fît porter en la tente de La Chataigneraye pour prendre avecque lui lequel lui estoit le plus propre ; ce qui auroit esté fait et fut pris par La Chataigneraye l'un d'eux, et l'austre fut rapporté au sieur de Montlieu.

“ Puis après, fut apporté, par le fils du sieur d'Ourse, deux épauettes pour le bras gauche, accompagné que dessus ; accordé ; et l'instant après fut apporté au mesme lieu des susdicts présents par le sieur de St. Vayon, accompagné de sieurs Baron de Lagarde et de St. Julien, et trompettes et tambouriers sonnans, un grand bouclier d'acier à ce que La

Chataigneraye fût pourvu d'un pareil, suivant la liste des articles, à quoy auroit esté débattu par le sieur d'Aumale ; disant que celui dont La Chataigneraye estoit pourvu n'estoit tel, ni semblable à celui de Jarnac. Ce différend fut fourni par devant les Connestable et Mareschaux qui auroient ordonné que ledict La Chataigneraye se pourvoiroit, suivant la liste des susdicts articles, ou se serviroit de celui qu'il avoit ; sus auroit néanmoins esté par ledict sieur de Montlieu fourni un bouclier à La Chataigneraye, semblable au sien, prévoyant que le combat pourroit estre retardé pour n'en estre fourni, ce que le sieur d'Aumale accepta.

“ Et aussitôt après, fut apporté par le sieur de l'Ourse, accompagné comme dict, un gantelet de fer de la main gauche, qui fut accordé, accepté par le sieur d'Aumale ; et incontinent après, fut apporté par le sieur Duquitinie, accompagné desdicts sieurs Baron de Lagarde, et St. Julien, trompettes et tambouriers sonnans, et susdicts lieux et desdicts présens, un *jacquet* de maille qui auroit esté accordé, accepté sans difficulté.

“ Plus, furent apportés par le sieur de Beaumont, accompagné comme dict est, deux *momons*, l'un desquels fut accordé, et pris par le sieur d'Aumale.

“ Toutes lesquelles armes défensives aincy accordées, fut ordonné que l'un des presvosts feroit le ban, et est ce qui s'ensuit.

“ De par le Roy, je fais exprès commandement à tous qu'aussitôt que les combattans seront au combat, chacun des assistants ait à faire silence, ni parler, ni tousser, ni cracher, et ne faire aucun signe, ni de pied, ni de main, ou d'austre qui puisse aider ou nuire, ni préjudicier ni à l'un ni à l'austre desdicts combattans ; et davantage je fais exprès commandement de par le Roy, à tous de quelle qualité et grandeur qu'ils soyent, pendant et durant le combat, il n'y ait à entrer dans le camp, ni à survenir ni à l'un à l'autre des combattans pour

quelque occasion que ce soit, sans permission des sieurs Connestable, Mareschaux de France, à peine de la vie.’

“ Et ce dict, furent amenés les combattants, à sçavoir l’assaillant le premier, mené par le sieur d’Aumale, son parrain, et accompagné de ceux de sa compagnie, et armé de ses dictes armes.

“ Et l’assaili, par le sieur le grand escuyer, son parrain, accompagné de ceux de sa compagnie, armé des susdictes armes, et faisant porter devant lui ses armes offensives, à sçavoir quatre épées par lesdicts sieurs d’Orfé, et sieur Baron de Lagarde, et ses quatre *daguettes*, avecque deux grandes, deux petites, par les sieurs de St. Vandry et de Beaumont.

“ Lesquels combattants, après avoir honoré le camp par le dedans, l’un après l’austre, avecque leurs parrains, les héraults, trompettes et tambouriers sonnans, auroient, l’un après l’austre, en passant près l’échafaud du Roy, fait les serments sur le saint évangile, estant sur le carreau de victoire, et drap d’or traînant jusqu’à terre, que leur auroit fait faire monsieur le Connestable, en présence du Roy, des Princes de son sang, et d’austres seigneurs, estant près de lui en la manière qui suit.

“ ‘ *Serment de l’assaillant.*

“ ‘ Moi, Jean de Vivone, jure sur les saints évangiles de Dieu, sur la vraie croix de nostre seigneur, et sur la foi du baptesme que je tiens de lui, qu’à bonne et juste cause, je suis venu en ce camp pour combattre Guy Chabot, lequel a mauvaïse et juste cause de se défendre contre, et aussy que je n’ai sur moi, ni en mes armes, paroles, en grever mon ennemi, et desquels je me veuille aider contre lui, mais seulement en Dieu et mon bon droit, en la force de mon corps et de mon ame.’

“ ‘ *Serment de l’assaili.*

“ ‘ Moi, Guy Chabot, jure sur les saints évangiles de Dieu, sur la vraie croix de nostre seigneur et sur la vraie foi de nostre baptesme que je tiens de lui, que j’ai bonne et juste

cause de me défendre contre François de Vivone, et outre que je n'ai sur moi et mes armes aucune parole charmée, ni intention desquelles j'ai espérance de gêner mon ennemi, et desquelles je me veuille aider contre lui, mais seulement à Dieu, en bon droit, en la force de mon corps et en mes armes.'

“ Et ce fait, ayant esté admis les combattants chacun en son siège, vis-à-vis l'un de l'austre, avoient procédé à l'accord des armes offensives, en la présence du Roy, des sieurs Connestable et Mareschaux de France, qui estoit une épée commune et portative, tant à pied qu'à cheval; la garde d'iscelle faite en une croisée, en quatre daguettes époinçées, deux pour chacun des combattants, et encore deux austres pareilles épées, en provision, mises entre les mains de monsieur le Connestable pour en pourvoir celui à qui l'épée défaileroit.

“ Et les armes prises d'un côté et d'austre, auroient esté mises les épées ès mains de chacun des combattants, et les daguettes attachées; soyent les plus grandes sur la cuisse droite, avecque aiguillettes, et entrant en dedans les bottines, et les plus petites mises à la jambe gauche, entre la bottine et la jambe, sans estre attachées.

“ Et aussy arrivé et équipé estant au pied pareil de toutes armes, estant le hérault d'armes de Normandie au milieu d'entr'eux, après que l'un dict: ' Prends!' le hérault prend congé d'eux, et iscelui recommander à expérience en leur vertu, avoit esté crié par trois fois :

' Laissez-les aller les braves combattants !'

“ Sur quoy seroient venus l'un contre l'austre, furieusement et dextrement et à l'abordée; l'un et l'austre se seroient rués plusieurs grands coups tant d'estoc et de taille, l'un desquels de la part de Montlieu auroit atteint la jambe gauche de La Chataigneraye, et jetant une estocade audict de Montlieu, lequel derechef donna un austre coup sur le mesme jarret; au moyen desquels coups, il auroit commencé à s'ébranler; quoy

voyant, ledict Montlieu se seroit demarché, apercevant La Chataigneraye, qui tout soudain seroit tombé par terre, et le voyant de tel que sa vie estoit à sa discrétion, lui auroit dict : ‘ *Rends moi mon honneur, et crie à Dieu merci et au Roy de l’offense que tu as faite : rends mon honneur !* ’ et ce reconnaissant ledict de Montlieu que la Chataigneraye ne pouvoit se lever, l’auroit laissé sans lui rien faire ne dire aistre chose, et s’en seroit allé droit devers le Roy, qui estoit sur son échafaud, et lui adressant la parole et mettant un genou en terre, lui auroit dict :

“ ‘ Sire, je vous supplie que je sois si heureux que vous m’estimiez homme de bien. Je vous donne La Chataigneraye ; prenez-le, Sire ; que mon honneur me soit rendu, ce ne sont que nos jeunesses, Sire, qui sont cause de tout ceci, qu’il n’en soit rien imputé aux sieurs ni à lui aussy pour sa faute ; car je vous le donne.’ ”

“ A quoy le Roy ne lui auroit rendu aulcune response, et sur ce, auroit retourné vers La Chataigneraye, qu’il doutoit se pouvoir relever ; et le voyant encore au mesme lieu, se seroit vers lui soudain jeté à deux genoux, levant les mains et le visage au ciel, disant ; ‘ *Domine, non sum dignus. Ce n’est pas de moi, ó Dieu, je te rends grâce !* ’ en frappant contre son estomac de son gantelet de fer : et ce fait, s’en seroit venu à La Chataigneraye, l’avisant, et l’admonestant encore de reconnoistre : sur quoy voyant ledict de La Chataigneraye que Montlieu réussit, ce qui estoit indubitable, plus le voyant en ce lieu, se seroit levé sur ses genoux, et étend encore son épée et le bouclier, se seroit efforcé de ruer contre le sieur de Montlieu, lequel s’approchant de lui, tenant son épée, lui auroit dict : ‘ Ne te bouge, je te tuerai.’ Et ainsi que ledict La Chataigneraye se seroit efforcé derechef de se lever, lui disant ; ‘ Tue-moi donc ! ’ seroit encore retombé de côté ; ce que voyant, le sieur de Montlieu, sans lui faire, ni dire aistre chose, s’en seroit retourné au Roy, lui disant :

“ ‘ Sire, je vous supplie que je vous le donne, et le prendre pour l’amour que vous l’avez nourri, et que vous m’estimiez homme de bien ; il me suffit que mon honneur me soit rendu et que je demeure vostre ; et si jamais vous avez bataille à faire, et que j’y sois employé, ou en quelque austre lieu, vous n’avez gentilhomme qui de meilleur cœur vous fasse service ; car je vous proteste ma foi que je vous aime, et désire mériter la nourriture que j’ai reçue du feu Roy, vostre père, et de vous ; et pour ce, Sire, prenez-le.’ ”

“ A quoy le Roy ne lui respondit encore rien, et sur ce, le sieur de Montlieu retourna derechef vers La Chataigneraye qui estoit couché de son long, et d’un côté estoit son épée hors de sa main, auquel il dict :

“ Chataigneraye, mon ancien compagnon, reconnois ton créateur, et que nous soyons amis.’ Voyant qu’il se mouvoit encore pour se tourner vers lui, se seroit approché de lui, et que la charité lui commandoit d’oublier l’inimitié, la prudence le conseilloit aussy en le différant encore, auroit du bout de son épée tiré celle de La Chataigneraye et l’une de ses dagnettes, qui estoit sortie de son fourreau ; et les ayant amassées et puis s’en retournant vers le Roy, les auroit baillées à Angoulême, hérault d’armes, et s’adressant encore au Roy, en connaissant La Chataigneraye estre fort mal de sa personne, et l’abondance de sang respandu, lui auroit dict derechef : ‘ Sire, je vous supplie, je vous le donne, pour l’amour de Dieu, puisqu’autrement ne le voulez prendre.’ Sur quoy, monsieur de Vendôme auroit supplié le Roy, lui disant : ‘ Sire, prenez-le, puisqu’il vous le donne.’ Comme auroit fait monsieur le Connestable, qui estoit retourné avecque ledict de Montlieu, du lieu où estoit La Chataigncraye, et duquel lieu tant lesdicts sieurs Connestable, Mareschaux et Amiral de France n’avoient bougé, pour ce devoir de tous offices, disant au Roy : ‘ Sire, regardez, car il le faut ôter.’ Pendant lesquels propos, le sieur de Montlieu, jetant sa vue sur les échafauds où estoient

les dames, dict, lors s'adressant à quelque grande dame qu'on disoit estre madame Marguerite, sœur du Roy : ' Madame, vous me l'avez toujours bien dict.' Et sur ce, le Roy, mû de pitié, s'adressa au sieur de Montlieu : '*Me le donnez-vous ?*' A quoy lui respondit, mettant un genou en terre : '*Oui, Sire ; suis je pas homme de bien ? Je vous le donne pour l'amour de Dieu et pour l'amour de vous.*' Sur quoy le Roy dict : '*Vous avez fait vostre devoir, et vous est vostre honneur rendu.*'

“ Et s'adressant le Roy à monsieur le Connestable, lui dict : '*Qu'on ôte La Chataigneraye,*' et pour ce faire, les héraults d'armes furent tous sousdain, et voulant le désarmer pour le soulager, auroient esté regardés mieux de sa personne : suivant l'ordonnance, auroit esté emporté hors du camp, en l'état qu'il estoit, par les héraults et quatre gentilshommes de sa compagnie qu'on avoit, pour ce faire, fait entrer, et fut porté et mis en sa tente ; et cependant estant toujours le sieur de Montlieu avecque le Roy, seroit venu son parrain, monsieur le grand escuyer, qui l'auroit embrassé et baisé ; et voyant lesdicts Connestable, Mareschaux et Amiral de France qu'il falloit que Montlieu eût le triomphe à lui dû ; derechef monsieur le Connestable dict au Roy : '*Il faut qu'il soit amené en triomphe par tous ceux de sa compagnie avec les héraults d'armes, trompettes et tambourins sonnans ;*' à quoy résiste le sieur de Boissy, grand escuyer, disant : '*Sire, il n'aura d'austre triomphe ; il suffit de ce qu'il a reçu et qu'il est en vostre bonne grâce.*' Et semblablement le sieur de Montlieu refusant le triomphe auroit dict : '*Il me suffit bien, Sire, je ne demande point cela ; tout ce que je désire est d'estre à vostre service.*' Quoy voyant le Roy l'auroit appelé et fait monter avecque le sieur grand escuyer, son parrain, et ledict Montlieu, qui seroient ensemble monsieur le Connestable allés vers le Roy, après, toutefois, que monsieur le Connestable eût assuré le sieur de Montlieu que La Chataigneraye estoit hors du camp, et celui-ci, monté et venu devant le Roy, l'embrassa,

lui disant : ‘ *Vous avez combattu en César, et parlé en Aristote.*’ Duquel honneur le sieur de Montlieu l’ayant humblement remercié, le suppliant de le tenir toujours pour son service, ce que le Roy lui auroit promis : sur ce auroit pris congé de Sa Majesté, et s’en retourna dans sa tente, de là au logis du grand escuyer avecque grand honneur et réputation, non seulement de la part du Roy, mais aussy de tous les princes, grands seigneurs, gentilshommes et austres qui auroint vu le combat ci-dessus, tant pour avoir eu affaire à un tel homme que La Chataigneraye, qui estoit estimé, et de fait fort hardi et adroit, que pour avoir usé avecque lui de telle grâce, et auquel honneur est bien tenu le sieur de Montlieu au sieur grand escuyer, pour lui avoir assisté comme ami et père après Dieu ; lequel, pour les causes qui sont à lui réservées seulement, faisant les choses selon ses jugements incompréhensibles, voire tout au contraire le plus souvent de l’opinion des hommes, pour leur apprendre qu’il est Dieu et qu’ils ne sont rien.”

No. III.

There exists an exceedingly interesting picture of the primitive manners of the Limousin in the last century, in a work written by an inhabitant of Limoges, a M. Juge. The book has become exceedingly scarce, and the following curious extracts from it are taken from the work of a more recent topographer.

“ Le premier trait frappant dont je me souviens, remonte à 1759. J’étudiais sous les jésuites : je demandai à mon professeur où il convenait de porter les programmes de la thèse que j’allais soutenir. ‘ Partout où vous verrez des vitres,’ me répondit-il. En effet, il n’y avait alors, à Limoges, que peu de croisées à grands carreaux ; les autres étaient en panneaux de verre enfumé, montés en plomb ; lorsqu’il en tombait quelques lambeaux, on y collait du papier.—Une seule croisée à balcon existait dans la ville, depuis 1740 (*place des bancs.*)

Dans les jours de procession, les passants s'arrêtaient pour voir toute une famille presque suspendue en l'air ; car ce balcon, qui existe encore, n'est supporté que par deux barres de fer.

“ L'ameublement répondait à cette apparence extérieure. Des lits dont le dossier, le ciel, les amples rideaux et la courte-pointe étaient de même étoffe rembrunie ; de grandes armoires de noyer, qu'on changeait de place à volonté ; de grandes tables fixes revêtues d'un vieux tapis de Turquie ; des coffres de cuir, avec des compartiments de clous dorés, décoraient les principaux appartements. Ces meubles existaient, dans certaines maisons, depuis deux ou trois siècles.—Il n'y avait pas alors soixante maisons fournies de couverts d'argent. On n'allumait pas d'autre feu que celui de la cuisine, où toute la famille mangeait : quatre voies de bois, que chacun tirait de son domaine, fournissaient une ample provision pour l'année. —Au moyen de cet arrangement, une seule chandelle, ou une seule lampe répandait assez de clarté pendant la nuit ; et une seule personne faisait tout le service.—On envoya se coucher sans lumière les enfants, les commis et les domestiques, soit pour leur donner l'habitude de mettre chaque chose à sa place, soit pour éviter qu'ils ne missent, par mégarde, le feu à la maison.—La cuisine, qui servait aussi de salon de compagnie, était tapissée d'images et de portraits de famille ; on y remarquait un immense vaisselier où étaient, symétriquement rangés, des plats, des assiettes et des écuelles d'étain. La faïence était presque inconnue. (Limoges aujourd'hui fournit aux départements voisins une très belle porcelaine!)—Au lieu de tourne-broche, il y avait une grande roue en bois, mise en mouvement par un animal qu'on y renfermait ; c'était quelquefois une oie qui, en attendant son tour d'être mise à la broche, faisait rôtir un dindon.

“ On laissait les enfants trois ans en nourrice ; il en coûtait par année, vingt-cinq à trente francs et un mouchoir.—A leur retour ils étaient confiés aux soins de la servante, dont l'accent

était ordinairement détestable, et qui ne savait les amuser qu'en leur parlant de loups-garous, de sorciers et de revenants. L'accent des autres habitants de la maison n'était guère meilleur ; on parlait habituellement patois.—Jamais la moindre caresse de la part des père et mère : la crainte était la base de l'éducation ; celui qui apprenait à lire aux enfants attachait, par derrière, leur chemise sur les épaules, tenait le livre d'une main et la discipline de l'autre, tout prêt à frapper à la moindre inadvertance. Les enfants n'étaient point admis dans la société ; lorsqu'ils s'y trouvaient par hasard, on ne leur permettait pas de parler, ils devaient seulement répondre oui ou non lorsqu'on les interrogeait.—Les filles ne quittaient jamais leur mère ; les unes et les autres étaient vêtues avec une extrême modestie. Quant aux orphelines, elles étaient reléguées dans un couvent où se trouvait un grand nombre de pensionnaires étrangères.—Malheureusement pour les jeunes personnes, on voulait perfectionner leur taille, au moyen d'un corset très resserré.—On ne faisait pas attention que cette taille reprenait, pendant la nuit, les formes qu'elle avait perdues pendant le jour.—Il en résultait un grave inconvénient, c'est que la gêne où était une fille l'obligeait à porter la tête en avant ; pour corriger ce défaut, on employait un collier de fer, recouvert de velours noir : l'appendice de ce collier appuyait sur le corset, et forçait la tête à se tenir en arrière.—C'était un spectacle singulier de voir, autour d'une mère de famille, quatre ou cinq demoiselles toutes jolies, droites comme des piquets, le cou pris dans ce carcan, et obligées de lever les bras pour voir leur ouvrage en travaillant ; elles gardaient le silence ou ne répondaient que par monosyllabes ; une pareille contrainte était faite pour inspirer l'envie d'en voir la fin : aussi quitter son corset et son collier était, pour une fille, une des douceurs qu'elle se promettait dans le mariage.

“ La garde-robe était composée de deux habits : l'un d'été, l'autre d'hiver, avec un habit noir pour les deuils, lorsque ces

habits étaient un peu râpés, on les faisait retourner, ils servaient encore quelques années ; venait le temps où ils n'étaient plus portables, alors le tailleur avait l'adresse d'en tirer de beaux habits pour les enfants.—Les garçons gardaient la jaquette jusqu'à l'âge de six ou sept ans.—On portait ordinairement des sabots ; c'était la chaussure la plus saine et la moins dispendieuse pour l'hiver ; ils coûtaient quatre ou cinq sous la paire.—Avec cette chaussure on aurait eu mauvaise grâce de se servir de parapluie ; il n'y en avait que pour les dames ; ils étaient de toile cirée avec des baguettes de bois au lieu de baleines ; les plus élégants étaient de toile grise.—Presque toutes les femmes portaient des capotes (espèce de surtout qui les couvrait de la tête aux pieds), tantôt pour se garantir des injures du temps, tantôt pour se dispenser de s'habiller. Avec ce costume très économique, fait d'étoffe légère, taffetas étamine ou camelot, elles étaient admises partout : c'était la mode.—Au 15 mai fixe, on quittait ses habits d'hiver pour les reprendre, au 1^{er} novembre, avec les manchons.

“ La plus stricte économie régnait dans les ménages ; on ne mangeait presque que du pain de seigle, appelé *pain d'hôtel* ; le pain de froment était pour les étrangers, rarement pour les maîtres de la maison.—Point d'autre vin que celui du pays, attendu que les grandes consommations avec le Bas-Limousin, le Périgord et l'Angoumois, n'étaient pas encore ouvertes.—La maîtresse de la maison tenait toutes les provisions enfermées, et portait continuellement sur elle une douzaine de clefs.—La servante payait tout ce qu'elle avait le malheur de casser.—On ne prenait le café que par remède. Un pain de sucre, du poids de quatre livres, suffisait à la consommation annuelle des bonnes maisons ; j'ai vu quelquefois nos voisins venir emprunter familièrement le nôtre, pour figurer un moment sur leur table : il le rendaient le plus souvent sans y avoir touché. Quand on tuait un cochon gras, on en faisait part aux plus proches parents, et ceux-ci en usaient de même.

—Le marchand de vin n'allait pas toujours à la cave ; il disait : *Allez le tirer vous-même.*

“ La manière de se nourrir de ces temps-là a presque passé en proverbe.—Chacun mangeait la soupe dans son écuelle, à neuf heures du matin, pour déjeuner. Le dimanche à dîner, le *bouilli* ; le soir, la *longe de veau* ; lundi, *bouilli fricassé* ; *blanquette* ; mardi, *fraise de veau* ; *volaille* ; mercredi, *carré de mouton* ; *omelette au lard* ; jeudi, *gigot rôti* ; *hachis* ; vendredi, *morue* ; *haricots* ; samedi, *purée* ; *potage aux choux*.—La bonne viande coûtait, à la boucherie, trois sous la livre ; il en fallait chaque semaine pour environ un petit écu.—L'économie était de tous les jours. Mais lorsqu'il s'agissait de donner quelque repas d'apparat, rien n'était épargné, le beau linge paraissait et l'on servait avec profusion.—Il y avait sur toutes les tables une boîte de fer-blanc, appelée, la *cuisinière*, divisée en quatre, contenant plusieurs sortes d'épices, dont chacun se servait à son gré ; au milieu de cette boîte était une case ronde, renfermant une noix muscade et une petite râpe.—Nos ancêtres trouvaient leur cuisine et leur vin de pays peu restaurants ; ils avaient recours aux aromates de l'Inde, comme étant nécessaires à la digestion.

“ On dînait, dans tous les ménages, à midi précis ; on soupaît à six heures, on se couchait à huit en hiver, et à neuf en été. Dans les grands jours, on se promenait après souper ; dans les petits, on jouait au piquet ou aux dames. Les domestiques avaient tant d'attachement pour leurs maîtres, qu'ils changeaient rarement de condition ; ils étaient assidus, laborieux, sobres, faisant toujours quelque réserve sur leurs modiques salaires ; réserve dont quelquefois ils gratifiaient, en mourant, ou leur maîtresse ou quelqu'un de ses enfants.—De leur côté, les maîtres étaient reconnaissants envers leurs vieux serviteurs ; ils leur léguaient un logement dans la maison, avec une pension viagère en blé ou en argent : quelques maîtres, mieux avisés, promettaient une forte somme pendant

qu'ils vivaient. C'était le moyen d'être encore mieux soignés.—On n'exigeait aucun service des domestiques pendant qu'ils prenaient leur repas. Le proverbe était que *quand César avoit dîné, il laissait dîner ses gens*. La maxime des domestiques était *bien boire, bien manger, et ne point faire de tort à son maître*.—Il n'y avait pas en ville d'autre lieu public d'amusement qu'un jeu de paume, fréquenté par la bonne compagnie, et plusieurs jeux de billard, où se rassemblaient les libertins et les escrocs. Le fils de famille qui s'y laissait entraîner était sévèrement repris par ses parents.—Le jour des cendres, on exposait sur la cheminée de la cuisine un tableau composé d'autant de lettres qu'il y a de jours en carême, et l'on effaçait tous les soirs une de ces lettres qui formaient l'inscription suivante :

M O R S
I M P E R A T
R E G I B U S
M A X I M I S
M I N I M I S
D E N I Q U E
O M N I B U S

“ Nos négociants jouissaient de la plus brillante réputation ; il était inouï qu'aucun d'eux eût manqué au moindre de ses engagements. Le plus grand ordre régnait dans leurs affaires ; ils allaient eux-mêmes à l'emplète, et tiraient tout de la première main pour gagner d'avantage. Ceux qui avaient vingt mille francs de revenu n'en dépensaient que quatre.—C'est sous ce rapport qu'ils étaient connus dans les grandes villes de commerce ; toutes les demandes qu'ils pouvaient faire à l'étranger étaient expédiées sur leur seule signature . . . La confiance aurait-elle craint de se livrer à la probité ?—Ils ne faisaient pas de grandes acquisitions foncières, ils aimaient mieux verser les bénéfices dans leur commerce ; ils n'achetaient des terres que lorsqu'ils étaient forcés, par quelques circonstances, à quitter le négoce ; et comme ils avaient beaucoup de prévoyance, ils commençaient par se munir d'une charge

de secrétaire du roi, qui leur assurait, et à leur nombreuse postérité, tous les privilèges de la noblesse.—En 1771, les principaux négociants de Limoges étaient au nombre de soixante-et-un ; on trouve leurs noms dans le calendrier de cette année.—Les marchands détaillants, tant de Limoges que des villes voisines, trouvaient, chez tous ces négociants, un crédit ouvert ; mais il était convenu de ne jamais demander des fournitures nouvelles, sans payer les anciennes.—Entre les anciennes corporations établies à Limoges, celle des marchands bouchers était la plus remarquable ; confinés dans le même canton, ils formaient, pour ainsi-dire, une tribu séparée des autres citoyens, soit par la rudesse de leur langage, soit par leurs mœurs. Ils ne s'alliaient jamais qu'entre eux ; étant par conséquent tous parents, ils faisaient cause commune ; ils avaient une église particulière, bâtie en 1475, et se disaient toujours pauvres, quoique très riches. Ils égorgeaient les animaux chez eux, ce qui rendait leur demeure d'une malpropreté révoltante ; mais il ne leur était pas permis de les y débiter : il y avait, pour la commodité du public, deux halles.—La viande s'y vendait à la livre.—Ils donnaient deux livres pour une, quand on prenait du côté, des os.—Tous nos marchands et revendeurs, sont aujourd'hui (1816) obligés de surfaire considérablement leur prix, sauf à le baisser après : ils ne vendraient pas s'ils mettaient à prix fixe, parce que l'acheteur se croirait trompé, si, à force de disputer, il n'obtenait un rabais quelconque.—Il m'est arrivé d'acheter du drap, dont le marchand me demandait trente francs, et de l'obtenir pour vingt-et-un. ' En vérité, lui dis-je, on ne devrait pas traiter ainsi ses amis ' ' Oh ! monsieur, mes ennemis ne viennent pas dans ma boutique. ' ”

THE END.

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