A TOY-STALL NEAR THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE.

PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

FRANCE

BY

JOHN FINNEMORE

WITH TWELVE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
IN COLOUR

BY

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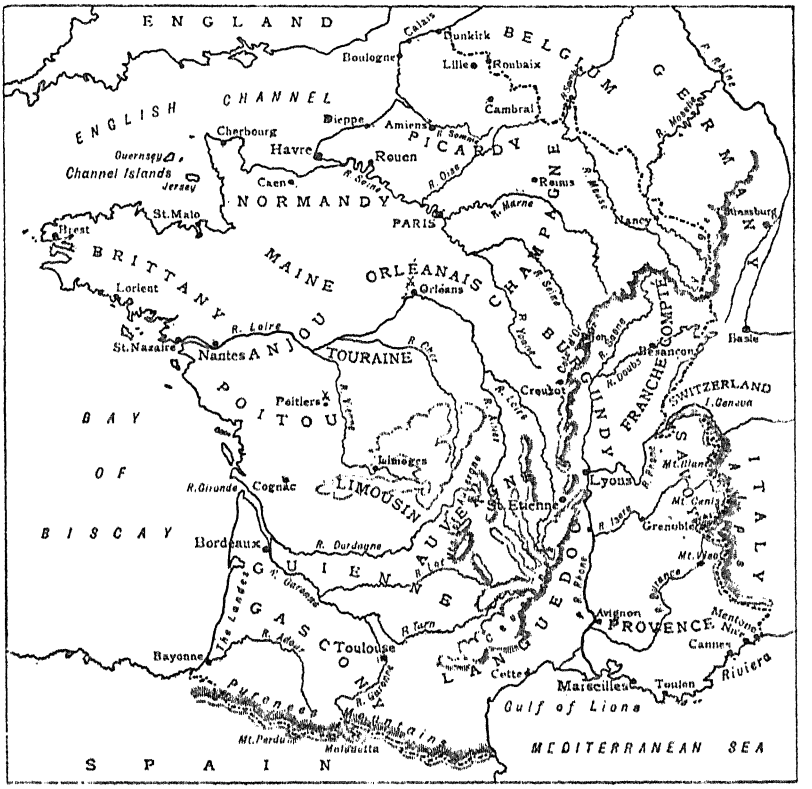

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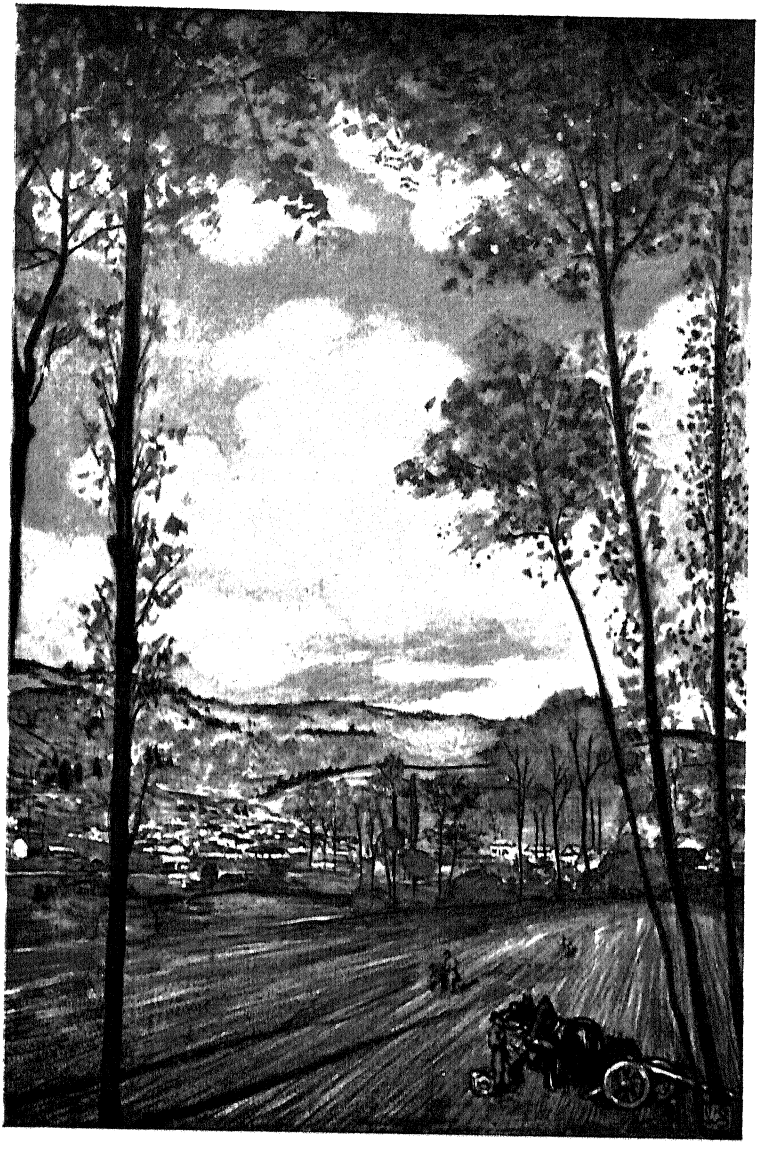


A NORMAN FARM.

FRANCE

CHAPTER I

OUR NEIGHBOURS

THERE is only one foreign country whose shores can be seen from our own land. A broad stretch of blue water guards our island home all round the coast, save at one point, and that point lies in the south-eastern corner of England. Standing on the heights of Dover, or on the pleasant Leas of Folkestone, we may see, on a clear day, a line of white cliffs and green slopes more than twenty miles away to the south. There lies France, our nearest neighbour, long our fiercest enemy, and now, happily, our friend.

France and England lie closely together, facing each other, not only across the famous Straits of Dover, but on either side of that long stretch of sea which we call the English Channel, and our French neighbours call "La Manche" (The Sleeve), because of its shape.

We know that those who live near each other often have many dealings together, either in friendship or enmity, and this is very true of England and France.

From the earliest times in the history of our island, there have been ships and men coming and going across this narrow strip of water. Before England was England and France was France, the Britons and the Gauls traded together and were friends. Cæsar crossed it with his Roman galleys, and, more than 1,000 years later, William the Norman sailed across with a French army, and made himself William the Conqueror.

From that day the history of England and France becomes closely interwoven. The Kings of England held broad lands in France, and were often more powerful there than the King of France himself. And when the French possessions were lost, the English Kings strove to win them back, and there were long wars and fierce struggles in reign after reign. This old enmity broke out again and again, until it was closed upon the field of battle nearly 100 years ago, at the great fight of Waterloo. To-day we all rejoice that these great nations and neighbours are close friends, and both Frenchmen in England and Englishmen in France are looked upon as honoured and welcome visitors.

France is, as a rule, the first foreign country visited by English travellers. This is so, not merely because it is so near, but because almost all the great roads of foreign travel sweep across the Straits of Dover, and then strike across France to the various countries of "The Continent," as we call Europe.

But many travellers are bound for France itself, for there is much to be seen in this noble country. The French themselves are very proud of their land, and

call it "La belle France" (Beautiful France). The name is well deserved, for it is a land of great beauty and charm. Under its blue sunny skies stretch broad plains, waving with corn and thick with orchards; the slopes of the hills are rich with vineyards, where grapes hang in glorious clusters of purple and gold in autumn; and along the banks of the broad rivers cluster pretty villages and towns, whose spires, gables, and towers are mirrored in clear, slow-moving streams.

Yet, however, the traveller who reaches France across the Straits of Dover does not at once suspect that it is so pleasant and fair a land. The northern portion of France forms part of the great plain of Europe. It is flat, it is fertile, it is well cultivated, and grows splendid crops of corn; it is rather dull, and the traveller speeds southward for Paris, or south-westwards for Normandy.

We will turn in the latter direction, for there lie two provinces, interesting above all to us English—Normandy, whence came that conquering race who helped to make modern England; and Brittany, whose scenery so much resembles the western part of our own land, and whose people speak a tongue akin to one still spoken among us to-day, the Welsh language.

CHAPTER II

IN NORMANDY

In many parts of Normandy the English visitor will feel quite at home. He sees around him meadows, orchards, woodlands, hedgerows dotted with elms, thatched cottages surrounded by pretty gardens, villages nestling in shelter of old church spires, and could fancy that he was gazing on a sweep of rich English country-side.

Normandy is famous, above all, for its orchards, and a visit to the fruit-growing districts in early autumn is of deep interest. Far and near spread the wide orchards, the trees laden heavily with splendid crops of apples and pears, hanging in masses of scarlet, yellow, and russet, from the drooping boughs. In Normandy the apple reigns supreme in place of the grape: cider takes the place of wine.

One thing would strike us as very odd—the manner in which cornfields and orchards are intermingled. Here is a field of wheat thickly set with apple-trees: there is an orchard, where an abundant crop of rye waves about the stems of the gnarled and twisted old trunks. The English farmer does not care to see a tree in his cornfield; he looks upon it as an enemy which will injure the growing crop. The French farmer plants walnuts among his barley, and grows the grain right up to the trunk. Thus he gathers a crop above and below at the same time.

The Norman farmer works very hard. He is astir with the day, and out in field or garden or orchard. While he is busy with spade or plough the women are milking and making butter, tending poultry, weaving lace, driving geese to the common, or watching sheep. All turn into the fields at hay and corn harvest, and into the orchards when the fruit is ripe.

Now, the apples and pears come down in myriads as the farmer beats the trees with a long stick. They drop with soft thuds into the long grass, and are piled high in great baskets, and borne away to the cider-house, where they are stored until fit for use. Then they are heaped into the crushing-trough, and the big white horse slowly plods round and round, working the mill which will drive the last drop of moisture from the oozing pulp. Splash and drip and trickle goes the juice into the huge vat below—a merry sound in the farmer's ear, for it means money clinking in his purse, and with plenty of sweet new cider to sell, he may laugh at want.

Late autumn sees him in the woods, for he must have an ample stock of firing for winter, and heath and bracken must be cut for winter litter in stable and byre. The children of the village poor eagerly gather fallen branches and the fat pine-cones, which will bubble with resin as they burn, and warm little blue fingers and pinched noses for many an hour of winter.

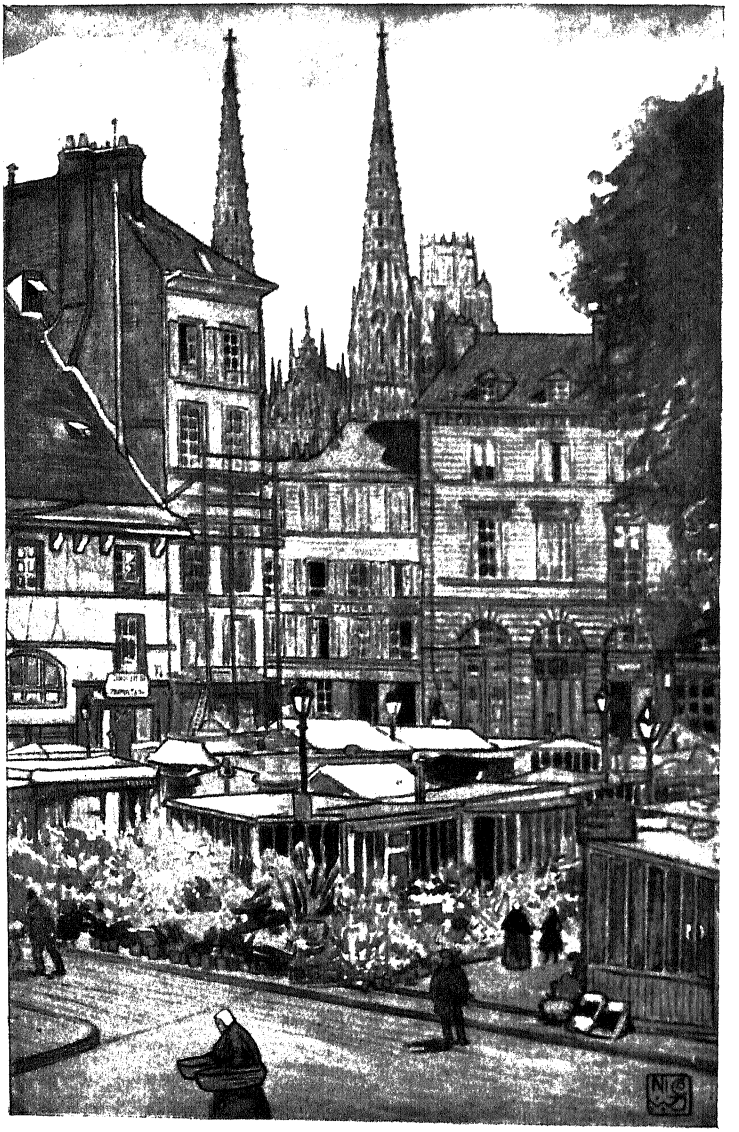
Brushwood is piled in a huge heap near the oven-house with its big chimney, seen near each farmstead. Bread is made at home, and, very often, not more than once in a month. Then the meal of rye, wheat, and maize is mixed together, using as little moisture as possible, for

some additions or alterations, so that the splendid pile is a standing history of how men have planned and built for the last 700 years.

Around the cathedral lies the medieval portion of the city. Looking from an upper window, says one writer, you would see "a grotesque and curious medley of chimneys, leaning walls, slanting house-roofs, and old-fashioned projecting stories, mingled in an inextricable fashion. The crooked buildings seem to have grown on to one another, and stuck there in the manner of periwinkles on a rock. There is hardly a line exactly horizontal or perpendicular; it is difficult to tell where one house begins or the other ends; to pull down one would be to have all the others tumbling about one's ears. High up are tiny platforms with doors opening on to them; the roofs are broken by many a quaint dormer window. The whole could only be swept away by a great fire, such as came to London in 1666."

In one of the streets is still to be seen an ancient tower, where the brave and noble French girl, Joan of Arc, was tried in May, 1431. A little later this great heroine and martyr was burned to death in an open place in the city, and her ashes were cast into the Seine.

Every night the curfew is rung at Rouen by a deep-toned bell, whose name is Rouvel. For many hundreds of years Rouvel has aroused the citizens upon alarm of foe or fire, and has sounded the summons to repose. It swings in a tower 500 years old, but Rouvel is older than that, and an interesting story belongs to its first belfry. In 1382 the people of Rouen broke out into revolt against the King of France because a new tax had



ROUEN.

been imposed upon them. The King's troops marched into the city and put down the rebellion, and, as Rouvel had called the citizens to arms, an order was given that the belfry should be destroyed. But though the tower came down, the citizens carried off and hid their famous bell. Soon they built a new tower for it, and to this day its deep, mellow notes ring out over city and river.

The town of Falaise is famous as the birthplace of William the Conqueror. The castle where that great captain and ruler first saw the light is a most striking object. It crowns a bold headland, springing from a wide plain—fit place for him to be born who was to stand head and shoulders above all others of his age.

The town itself is the prettiest little place, with terraces and gardens, and grey old houses peeping out of masses of fresh foliage. The people of Falaise love flowers, and not only are their gardens trim and neat, but their window-sills are decked with flower-boxes and pots full of brilliant blooms. Even the butchers' shops are gay with great posies of lilac, peonies, forget-me-not, and other bright flowers.

From Falaise a broad road runs straight across the plain to Caen. Falaise saw the opening of William's life; the beautiful city of Caen saw his body laid in a church which he had himself built.

Caen is a city of churches. Like Oxford, it "throws up a forest of towers and spires," and bells ring all day, and clocks chime the hours from many steeples. It has lovely public gardens and a fine park. In its quaint narrow streets may be found many fine old houses,

timber-framed and carved, though, as a whole, the town is modern.

The quiet, unpretending town of Bayeux is famous for its noble cathedral, its fine old carved houses, and, above all, for the famous Bayeux tapestry, with its pictures, worked in wool, of the Norman invasion and the Conquest of England. This famous piece of needlework was executed soon after the Conquest, though it is not certain that it was worked by Matilda, wife of the Conqueror, and her ladies, as many believe.

It is a strip of linen about 20 inches wide and some 230 feet long, and is so arranged in a glass case that the visitor can see every figure from end to end. The threads of the design are of worsted, and to this day their colours are as fresh and bright as when they passed through the fingers of the worker. The incidents are many. They begin with Harold's voyage to Normandy, his shipwreck, his capture, and his falling into the hands of William. There is the famous scene—it took place in the very cathedral which stands there to-day in Bayeux—where Harold swore to support William's claim to the English crown, and was tricked into swearing on the bones of saints and other sacred relics.

So the story goes on until the Battle of Hastings is reached, and this great scene occupies one-fourth of the whole length. At last Harold is seen drawing the fatal arrow from his eye, and the English take to flight. Towards the end of this wonderful piece of work the stitches are unfinished, the design is only shown in faint outlines, and the final scenes are left incomplete. But ample has been done to give us a vivid and striking

picture of those great historical events, which must have been a living memory to the ladies whose clever fingers portrayed them more than 800 years ago.

CHAPTER IV

IN BRITTANY

In Brittany the West-Country Englishman or the Welshman finds himself quite at home. Sweeps of wild heath, wide barren stretches of moorland, rugged broken hill-sides, where masses of granite thrust themselves through the low bushes, gorse, and fern, and heather—all combine to form a familiar picture. In the lowlands there are pastures dotted by herds of the little black-and-white Breton cows, the low thatched, one-storied cottages are scattered about among pine woods, and on the ridges stand quaint stone windmills.

To this land there come every year thousands of visitors from every part of Europe, and many from America. They wish to see the quaint old towns and villages which Brittany possesses in such abundance; they wish to see the strong, simple race of people who inhabit this picturesque corner of France, and to enjoy the strong sweet air that blows over the hills from the sea.

The Breton peasant is a distinct figure among the workers of France. He is proud, and brave, and indedependent. He loves liberty, and is his own master, tilling his plot of land or putting to sea in his own fishing-boat. The granite of his native hill-side seems

to have entered into his blood, and made him hardy, strong, and stubborn in clinging to old beliefs. In Brittany we seem no longer to be in the twentieth century, but to have wandered back among a people of the Middle Ages.

The Breton believes firmly in witches and warlocks, the evil eye, and the power of a favourite saint to work miracles. He kneels at the wayside shrines to say his prayers, and to each shrine an ancient legend clings. Brittany is a land full of old memories, full of old crosses, churches, cathedrals, stories of old pilgrimages to the shrines of saints, and of miracles devoutly believed in. But there are remains of a still more ancient past, of menhirs and dolmens which belong to pagan times, and speak of rites and worship long forgotten.

Menhirs are great stones set on end, sometimes alone, sometimes in lines and circles ; dolmens are rude stone chambers; both, it is thought, were designed as places of worship or of burial, or in memory of some great event.

Brittany abounds with these strange and mysterious monuments, and the most famous of all are at Carnac, on the western coast. Here there are set up vast numbers of huge granite stones, forming avenues miles in length. None knows who set them up, none knows what they mean. They speak of a dim, far-off past, whose memory has perished save for these immense stones, many of them 18 feet in height, huge granite slabs hung with long white lichens, and hoary with age.

The very houses of Brittany seem quite apart from the modern workaday world. They are built of massive stones, cut from grey granite, and formed in quaint and

ancient designs. In some of the towns are to be found streets whose houses stand now as they have stood for hundreds of years. Many of these old buildings are formed of heavy timbers, with one story projecting above another, until the houses almost meet across the narrow street. Each story rests on huge brackets, whose ends are carved in the strangest and most fantastic fashion—heads of monsters, grotesque human faces, and the like. But, for the main, the Breton builds his house of the granite so plentiful among his hills, and builds it in so solid a fashion that it lasts unchanged for century after century.

Let us enter a Breton house and see how the people live. Inside it is rather dark and close-smelling, for the window is small, and not often opened. The furniture, too, is dark—heavy tables, stools, benches, and dressers made of stout slabs of chestnut wood, and polished to glassy smoothness. In the open hearth smoulder a few logs, and above them hang a great pot, which simmers all day, and from which all the family meals seem to come. The roof is hung thickly with hams, bladders of lard, ropes of onions, bunches of herbs, and so forth. The house is at present empty save for little Nannic and her baby brother, asleep in his huge cradle, which has been put up on the settle out of the way.

Nannic herself is a quaint little figure in her strange Breton dress. She wears a petticoat of thick woollen stuff, a little apron, a blue bodice with a broad linen collar, a cap, and a pair of huge wooden sabots. The big wooden shoes look very clumsy and awkward, but in truth they are not so. They fit well, and the thick

sock of leather and wool makes them easy to the foot. They suit the rough country over which they are to be worn, and if you were to put Nannic in shoes, she would not like them at all. She is in charge of the house, and has just finished clearing up, for girls are taught at a very early age to take their share in household labours. Now she will put on a big white cap over the small coloured one she has been wearing, for the great lace cap is not worn during work-time, but put carefully away.

The cap, or "coif," is the great feature of every Breton woman's costume. It is made of real old lace, and is looked upon as a very precious possession. It stands high above the head with wide wings and loops, and is of a different shape in different parts of Brittany. At a great festival as many as a dozen or fifteen shapes may be seen, and a Breton will tell you at once from which town or district a woman comes as soon as he sees her cap.

Now the workers come in from the field. And the men, too, are dressed in Breton fashion—round felt hats with long dangling ribbons, blouses or jackets with many buttons, very much bepatched trousers, and big wooden shoes. They sit down to cabbage soup, brown or black bread, cider, and dried fish. They eat hastily, and then hurry back to the field, for time presses, leaving Nannic to wash up the blue-and-white plates, and store them on a shelf.

If you make friends with Nannic she will show you her best dress. Now, best dresses are, of course, rather important affairs anywhere, but in Brittany they are of

the greatest consequence. For a best dress may be generations old, made of the finest and strongest dark-blue cloth, so richly embroidered and decked with gold tinsel that the original material is quite covered up. With this goes a brilliant silk apron, a cross of gold for the neck, a broad sash of velvet ribbon, a handsome lace cap and collar, and a gold chain with lockets and charms hung on it.

Such a splendid costume is worn only on high days and holidays, and then with the greatest care. Thus it lasts for a long time, and is handed down from mother to daughter sometimes for 100 years.

Now the baby wakes under the great pile of clothes which has been heaped upon him, and Nannic chatters to him in Breton. She can speak French, but she never uses it at home, where all talk the native tongue. Nor would she like you to think of her as a French girl, for she is a Breton, and proud of it.

Her afternoon task is the making of ropes of onions, which have been grown in their fields. In a short time her father and some friends intend to load a fishing-lugger with a cargo of onions, and sail across the Channel to England. The Breton onion-sellers, in quaint felt hats, blue patched blouses, and huge sabots, are familiar figures in the South-West of England and in Wales, where they hawk their ropes of onions from door to door.

They feel more at home in Wales, perhaps, than anywhere else, for the Breton and Welsh tongues belong to the same family of languages, and a Breton and a Welshman can soon come to understand each other.

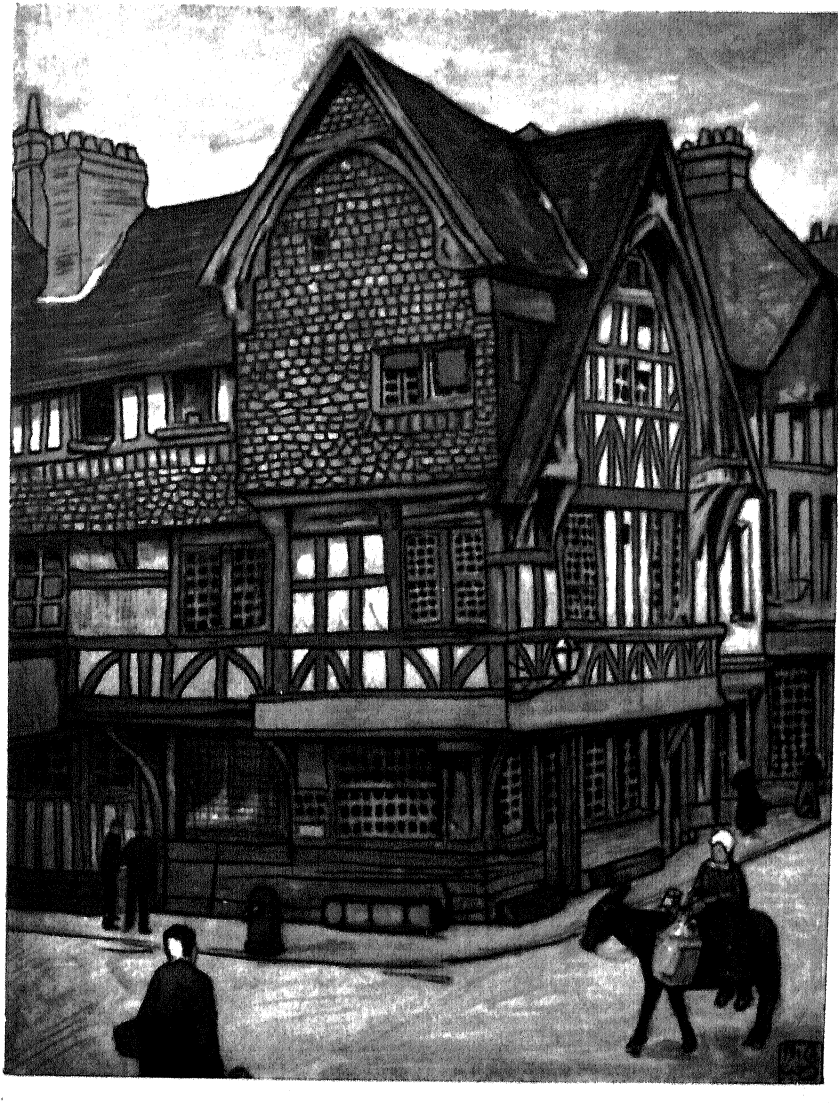
CHAPTER V

THE "PARDON" OF ST. ANNE

If you were to ask little Nannic what was the greatest day in all the year, she would answer at once, "The *pardon* of St. Anne." If you were to ask her what a *pardon* is, she would stare at you in great surprise, for surely every one knows that the *pardon* is the great religious festival of the Breton year. It is the day when the Breton trudges to the shrine of his patron saint to burn a candle there as an offering of thankfulness, and to pray for the forgiveness of all his sins.

There are many *pardons* in Brittany. All the summer long, in this village or that, a local *pardon* is being held, and the neighbourhood gathers for the day of prayer and festival. But the greatest of them all is the *pardon* of St. Anne of Auray.

Auray is a small town of Brittany, and St. Anne is its patron saint. The story runs that some 1,200 years ago St. Anne appeared to a Breton farmer named Nicolazic, and bade him dig in a certain spot in a field near at hand. He did so, and found an image of the saint. Then she commanded him to erect there a chapel to her memory. The chapel was raised, but that first shrine has long since disappeared. Several chapels have been built upon the spot, one after the other, and each has been finer than the last, until now a splendid cathedral stands there. This great church has been made very beautiful by those who wish to show



OLD TIMBER-FRAME HOUSE.

their gratitude to St. Anne for favours which they believe they have received, or those who wish her to bless them in the future. The altar is decked with gold and precious stones, the walls are covered with costly marbles and pictures of great value.

The *pardon* of St. Anne is on July 25, and the dawn of that summer day sees thousands of people afoot and making their way towards Auray. Many have started before the day, for the Breton peasant thinks nothing of walking 100 miles to the *pardon* of St. Anne. If some one of the household is not there to pray before her shrine and burn a candle in her honour, that house will not prosper in the coming year. This is the devout belief of every Breton peasant, and so every road is crowded, every vehicle is filled.

Nannic does not need to start before the morning of the day, for she lives within twenty miles of Auray, and she and her parents are to drive there in the big waggon which belongs to their friend and neighbour, Alanik Rosel.

The first peep of dawn sees them afoot, and the sun is barely up when the big waggon rattles out of the village, packed with people and drawn by big fat horses, whose heads are decked with gay rosettes of pink, white, and blue, formed of tissue-paper. Upon the harness are fixed large round bells, which tinkle gaily as the waggon rolls along the dusty way.

Soon they reach the highway, and now the waggon must go slowly, for the broad road is packed from side to side. Crowds of peasants march along on foot, their big wooden shoes filling the air with a rattling clatter of

sound, and every one holds in his or her hand a long, thin white candle to burn at the shrine. Their faces are serious and their lips move steadily, and the air is filled with a low hum, for all are praying in soft voices as they march towards the sacred place. Besides the people on foot and on horseback, there is a multitude of carts, waggons, carriages, diligences, packed inside and out, and then there are the beggars. Many of the latter are poor maimed cripples, drawn by a friend on a little wooden cart, or limping along on crutches. They beg of the crowd in high, shrill voices, and hold up their tin cups. Nor do they beg in vain, for the sous rattle into the cups in a steady stream.

At last a murmur of joy runs through the marching crowd, for they see the slender spire of the cathedral shoot up above a line of distant trees, and know that the shrine is at hand. Upon reaching the place many of the pilgrims push their way to the fountain of the saint. The water of this is believed to have miraculous powers, to heal the sick, to cure the halt, the maim, and the blind. The peasants eagerly bathe their heads, their hands, and their feet in the milky-looking liquid which fills the two stone basins, while others even drink it. Others, again, fill small brown bowls, and carry the sacred water away for those who are unable to reach the fountain. On the outskirts of the crowd there are hundreds of the old and feeble lying on the ground to rest after their long, toilsome journey. Some are asleep, some eat tough crusts of black bread, some bind up their torn and bleeding feet.

Nannic and her friends arrived at the *pardon* in good

time and in great comfort, for their journey was not long, and had been made in Rosel's waggon. They went at once to the square in front of the church, where there were many stalls, the keepers of whom called upon the people to buy chaplets, little figures of St. Anne, wax candles large and small, rings, crosses, and rosaries. Nannic, though, did not look at one of the stalls until she had raised her eyes to the great shining gilded statue of St. Anne upon the tower, and had said her prayers.

At noon the square before the church was packed with close rows of kneeling figures. The tall white caps of the women spread like a sea of glittering white, broken by the dark heads of the men. Then trumpets sound, and there is the roll of a drum, and a great golden cross is borne through the doorway of the church. A procession is formed, and the shrine of St. Anne, an ark of gilded wood, is borne through the kneeling ranks of the peasants by a dozen long-haired Bretons. Finally, the Bishop appears upon a balcony and looks over the crowd. There is a swift roll of drums to call every one's attention, and the multitude gaze eagerly upon him. He slowly surveys the crowd on every side, then he raises his hands in the attitude of blessing. He utters a prayer, and his hands fall to his sides. Out ring the trumpets, and the sweet clear voices of boys rise in a chant in honour of the saint, and a deep murmur of devotion runs through the vast crowd. The *pardon* has been said.

Now the scene changes with magic swiftness. Up to this moment the *pardon* has been a festival of

devotion and prayer, now it becomes a fair, and the worshippers become gay revellers. Up spring a host of hawkers, who sell whistles and paper horns and long brightly-coloured paper tubes with plumes of tissue-paper at the ends. The young people buy these, and a babel of gay uproar follows. Jokes fly from mouth to mouth, and showers of coloured confetti dance in the air as the merrymakers fling handfuls at each other.

As soon as the *pardon* is over, Nannic and her friends go to get something to eat. Beside the road there are long lines of tents, built in a very simple fashion by stretching canvas and coarse sacking over great hoops set in the ground. Inside are rude tables set out with dishes of bread, and a cider cask is in full flow. Before the tent is a fire of peat, and here fish is being broiled on stones.

When the simple meal is over, away goes Nannic with some young friends to the fair. There are rows of booths ready to tempt the sous out of the peasant pockets. The stalls are laden with gingerbread and sweets, with toys and presents, and a thousand trifles to amuse or adorn the purchasers. There are shows much the same as may be seen at an English fair—fat women, living skeletons, men without heads, jugglers, conjurers, sword-swallowers, acrobats, and snake-charmers.

But Nannic and her friends do not stay long in the fair, for they hear the shrill notes of the "binious," the Breton bagpipes, which are sounding for the grand dance that closes every *pardon*. The way to the dancing-place is shown by the stream of girls and young men moving thither, and at times a young man takes

the hand of a girl, and they dance along, keeping step to the music.

Soon a band of dancers forms in line for the stately gavotte of the *pardon*. This dance has a religious origin, and is performed with much ceremony. There is a ribbon of honour for the best dancer—a broad, bright blue ribbon with silver tassels, worn across the shoulder—and to gain it is a great feat.

The biniou-players now begin to sound the long-drawn notes of the dance, and the dancers, who have been standing hand in hand, break into fours and begin the dance. They who dance the longest will win the prize, and as couple after couple drop out, exhausted and breathless, the excitement rises steadily. Nearly an hour passes, and now only two couples are left. The peasants surround these, and their friends shout wild cries of encouragement. But at length one couple can do no more, and they stop. The other pair swing each other through the final figures of the dance, and are then hailed as victors. The girl is crowned with a wreath of tinsel and flowers, and the young man receives the ribbon.

Nannic and her companions join in the shout of applause which salutes the winners, and then return to the square. It is high time for them to do so. There is Alanik Rosel blowing his whistle and ringing loudly the bells on his harnessed team, while a friend roars the name of their village. It is the signal for departure. With sighs of regret little Nannic and her companions climb into the waggon. The square is full of merry uproar as the departing peasants shout gay farewells to

each other. How different from the murmur of prayers or devout silence of the morning! But now Alanik whips up his horses, and the huge waggon rumbles heavily away down the dusty road in the evening light. The cathedral and its spire are lost to sight behind a veil of trees. The *pardon* of St. Anne is over.

CHAPTER VI

PARIS

PARIS, the capital of France, is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It is beautiful in its noble parks and gardens; beautiful in its splendid public buildings; beautiful in its broad, handsome streets, gay with trees and flowers, and its famous boulevards.

Paris is a city to which vast numbers of visitors flock, and she is always ready to receive them. Her wide, roomy pavements, laid so neatly and swept so clean, are the pleasantest of places for an idler to loiter. Amid the splendid buildings which line the boulevards are many cafés, whose little tables are scattered under the trees; and the lounger may sit at his ease, sipping his coffee or drinking his wine, reading his paper, or watching the constant stream of traffic which flows up and down the broad pavements and the wide thoroughfare.

To see Paris, perhaps, at her best, it is well to pay a visit in the spring. The trees are bright in their fresh, tender green, the sun shines brightly and is pleasantly

warm, the sky is blue, and, as it seems, all the world has come out to play. The streets are crowded with splendid carriages, the parks and gardens are filled with throngs of idlers, strolling along the broad paths or seated on the benches. One wonders, seeing so many people at leisure, whether there be a workaday Paris or no. But behind this gay show of ease, fashion, and pleasure there are vast multitudes of busy workers, whose labours make Paris the chief commercial city of France.

Perhaps no capital of Europe is so important in its own country as Paris is in France. London is a city of vast importance in England, but it does not dominate our country so certainly as Paris dominates France. Paris is the centre which gathers up all the thought and power of France, so that it has been well said that France is a great garden, the finest flowers of which have been picked to make a nosegay, and that nosegay is called Paris. The Parisians express this by saying, "What Paris thinks to-day, France will think to-morrow."

But Paris has two sides—a gay and a grave, and to each of these it may be said that a separate city is devoted. These cities are divided by the Seine. On the right bank lies the city of pleasure, where rise magnificent public buildings, triumphal arches, and columns of victory—where streets are lined by the most famous shops in the world, where parks and boulevards are crowded by visitors of all nations. On the left bank lies another Paris, an older, quieter city, with narrow streets and tall, quaint houses. "It is the Paris

of the student, the thinker, the lawyer, the artist," the city of learning. Here stand the Panthéon, a splendid pile, where a grateful country erects memorials to famous Frenchmen ; the Sorbonne, a great school of learning ; and the Invalides, where soldiers whose health has broken down in the service of their country find rest and comfort.

To gain an idea of what fashionable Paris is like we must recross the river, and take our stand in the Place de la Concorde—an immense and majestic square, adorned with statues and a fine obelisk, with beautiful fountains springing high in the air. It is a sunny spring afternoon, and all Paris is out of doors. On the one hand we see the lovely gardens of the Tuileries, while on the other runs away the broad Avenue des Champs Élysées, its vistas closed in the distance by the famous Arc de Triomphe.

The scene is full of gaiety and splendour. The avenue, of great width, is bordered by wide pavements planted thickly with trees, and behind the trees stand rows of palaces and mansions, in which dwell people of rank and wealth. Under the trees are children playing, people strolling to and fro, and rows upon rows of benches and chairs, where peaceful citizens are reading their papers or sitting idly in the sun, and watching the fine carriages and swift motor-cars which roll by in an incessant stream.

We walk up the Champs des Élysées, with its open-air cafés, its splendid restaurants, its pretty kiosks where newspapers are sold, and arrive at the Arc de Triomphe, a magnificent triumphal arch, built to celebrate the

A LITTLE NORMAN PEASANT GIRL.

victories of the great Napoleon. Here we may gain the well-known Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, which has the air of a piece of lovely woodland, and is a favourite resort of Parisians.

Perhaps as we return up the Champs des Élysées evening is drawing on, and now the scene becomes one of wonderful and striking interest. The crowds on foot and in carriages seem to thicken, electric lights flash out on leaping fountains and broad beds of flowers, and lamps begin to shine among the foliage. In front of the restaurants the waiters begin to hang coloured lanterns on the trees, and spread snowy tablecloths on the little tables which stand about under the boughs; it is like dining in a garden. At another spot the cymbals clash and music bursts out, and the voice of some popular singer rings across the wide avenue. That is a café chantant, a café whose customers are regaled with music and song as they sit at their tables, and the busy waiters run to and fro.

CHAPTER VII

PARIS ALONG THE SEINE

Just as Paris is the heart of France, so the River Seine is the heart of Paris. It is a far greater feature in the life of Paris than is the Thames in the life of London. Wherever you turn you are coming upon it, and its broad, pleasant flood soon becomes a friend as you cross

and recross it continually. It is spanned by a host of fine bridges, and you get into the habit of leaning with the other idlers on the parapet, and watching the gay, bustling, and lively scene. To and fro over the shining surface shoot the pretty little steamboats, carrying passengers from pier to pier. Mouches and hirondelles (flies and swallows) the Parisian calls these, for they seem to dart over the water as those creatures dart through the air. These river-boats are very convenient, and the piers of Paris are as much used as London stations; the Seine is in reality one of the chief highways of the great city.

Along its banks stretch the broad, pleasant quays of stone, where loungers love to pass their days and idlers stroll from stall to stall. Famous among them are the Quai Voltaire, where the second-hand booksellers set out their wares along the parapets, and the book-lovers turn over the heaps of volumes, in hopes of finding some stray treasure among the mass of printer's ink and paper; and the Quai d'Orsay, splendid with the buildings which house Embassies and Ministries. From the river we get a fine view of the magnificent palace called the Louvre, a glorious treasure-house of art; and beyond the Louvre there lies an island in the river, the Île de la Cité.

This Island of the City well deserves its name, for here we have the cradle of infant Paris, the tiny city of fishermen and river-dwellers who, long ages ago, were the first inhabitants of Lutetia, as the city was named in Roman days. For a long period Paris clung to the island, for in troublous times it was a strong position of

defence, with the river on every hand; but little by little the great town spread on either bank, until to-day the island is but a small portion of the mighty capital. High above the island spring the noble towers of the mother church of Paris, the glorious cathedral of Notre Dame. This ancient building is most beautiful, both within and without, adorned with splendid pictures and statues, with gospel stories carved in stone, with quaint wild figures of beasts and birds, and monsters set up along the parapets or grinning from the eaves. It is one of the most famous churches in the world.

We pass on up the river, and are struck by the long rows of fishermen who make the quays and bridges bristle with a forest of long fishing-rods, mostly poles of bamboo. Do they ever catch anything? No; but they have the fun of watching their floats, they enjoy the sun and the fresh air, and they can cast a glance at all the pleasant passing traffic of the river.

Here and there are cheerful family parties picnicking beside the stream. The children dig in the sand, the mothers sit and sew and gossip, just as if they were at the seaside. At another spot the bank is a resort for public amusement, and is lined with shooting-galleries, roundabouts, swings, peep-shows, cheap restaurants, and café concerts.

Here is a turn of the river, where the stream glides between banks crowned with trees and quiet old buildings. A bridge crosses it, a few people stroll idly on the shore, horses are being bathed in the gently flowing water. It looks like a peaceful country scene; it is in the heart of Paris, and round the bend lies Notre

Dame. A constant feature of these quiet turns of the river is the wash-house, a long, floating building, where busy laundresses ply their wooden bats and beat the clothes of the neighbourhood into snowy whiteness, their tongues going as fast as their bats, and jokes and banter fly as fast as the suds.

The Seine is so much a stream of pleasure that one needs to be reminded that it is a stream of great business also, and that its waterway makes Paris, though more than 100 miles from the sea, one of the chief ports of France. Sea-going ships run up the Seine to its quays, tug-boats draw lines of barges up and down the river, and the commerce of the great city is fed on every hand by a splendid system of canals, as well as by its own river.

The Seine and its tributaries link Paris with the richest provinces of Central and Northern France, from the teeming vineyards of Burgundy in the south to the fertile corn-lands and orchards of Normandy in the north. There are canals from the Seine basin into Belgium, putting Paris in touch with the manufactures of that busy country; there is a waterway from Paris to the Rhine, and thus into Germany; there are two routes by which one may travel by water through the very heart of France and reach Lyons and the Rhone, and thence go down to the great port of Marseilles, on the Mediterranean. And all the roads and railways of Northern France run towards Paris as the spokes of a wheel run towards the hub.

Thus the great city is fed with wine and oil, corn and coal and timber, with firewood, building stones, cement, iron, steel, and the thousand other things it

requires for its domestic use and for its many manufactures. It is a hive to which the busy bees bring from all sides the honey which the rich and fertile country affords in such abundance, and a vast part of these tributary offerings float into it swiftly, by puffing steamer, or slowly, by dragging barge, along the busy Seine.

CHAPTER VIII

AT HOME IN FRANCE

CHILDREN have a happy time of it in France. The French baby is always a great pet, and in all ranks children are taken very great care of. Indeed, it is a question seriously debated in France to-day whether children are not too much spoiled, and allowed to have their own way quite too much. There is one thing certain, that if they do not behave themselves it is not the parents alone who suffer, but visitors and strangers also.

For in France nurseries and nursery meals are unknown. The baby comes to the dinner-table, and is introduced to the midst of family life as soon as it is weaned. In Paris house-room is so scarce that room for a nursery cannot be found; in the country it is the habit for the children to be a part, and a very large part, of the family life.

It is true that this system causes the French child to quickly gain ease of manner; but, on the other hand, they soon lose the simplicity of childhood, and become

little men and women of the world, with their likes and dislikes, their tastes and fancies, which are humoured as seriously as those of any grown-up person.

In a wealthy household the nurse is a person of very great importance. In the parks and public gardens of Paris the nurses with their tiny charges are a great feature of open-air life. On every fine day they may be seen moving up and down, or seated in rows on the benches, each in grey cloak and snowy mob-cap, with long streamers of broad plaid ribbon flowing nearly to the ground. These ribbons are very beautiful and costly, and if the prevailing colour is red, it betokens that the nurse has charge of a boy; if blue, the baby is a girl.

The French girl of the upper classes has much less freedom than her English sister. While the latter may walk or ride with friends of her own age, or pay them visits or ask them to visit her, the French girl may do none of these things. She is not allowed even to cross a street alone to post a letter. She is always attended and guarded like a royal Princess.

If her mother is not able to accompany her, an attendant who occupies a position between a companion and a governess is always at her side. There are great numbers of poor gentlewomen who earn a livelihood by escorting girls to schools, to classes, or taking them for walks. The French girl is always under some one's eye; she is never permitted any freedom of action on her own account. "With equal painstaking are chosen companions, books, and amusements. All these an English girl selects for herself; quite otherwise is it with her young neighbour over the water. So long as

she remains under the parental roof, she accepts such guidance as a matter of course. To invite a schoolfellow to the house without first asking permission, to take up a book before consulting her mother as to its suitability, would never enter her head."

This strict watchfulness is kept up until a girl is married, and, if she does not happen to marry it is still maintained, so that a woman of mature age has often little more freedom than she enjoyed as a girl. "In a French journal lately appeared the bitter cry of 'an old maid of thirty.' It seemed mighty hard, wrote this victim of custom and prejudice, that whilst girls of eighteen and twenty, just because they were married, could read what they chose and run about unattended, she was still treated as a schoolgirl."

But, of course, we are speaking only of the girls of wealthy families, and below that order comes the great mass of French girlhood—the girls of the middle classes, the girls of the working classes, the peasant girls, in village of the plain or mountain hamlet.

In the first place, every child goes to school, and, when schooldays are over, the peasant children work early and late in vineyard, or cornfield, or dairy. Every peasant girl learns at a very early age to be careful and thrifty. She learns the simple peasant cookery, the making of the cabbage soup, the baking of the big loaves of bread, the churning of butter and pressing of cheese.

If she goes into service she proves very willing and hard-working if her wages are good; if not, she does not remain in her place. That is the chief

always in her eyes—the money return for her labour; for save she must and will. She does not weigh hard work, poor food, rough sleeping accommodation, for a moment against good wages and the handsome money presents which she expects at the New Year. Nor does she waste a single penny of her money. The aim of her life is "a respectable account with that universal banker of French folks—the State."

It is true that this passion for thrift often runs to extremes, and becomes a grasping desire to save for the mere pleasure of saving's sake. Miss Betham-Edwards, the famous writer on French subjects, remarks: "Here is a telling instance in point. A few years ago the owner of a fine château in Northern France took me for a day or two to her winter residence. A former woman servant, now elderly, acted as caretaker of the spacious mansion, vacating it when the family returned in November. 'You know France so well that you will easily believe what I am going to tell you,' observed my hostess. 'Yonder good woman has property bringing in two hundred pounds a year, yet, for the sake of earning a little more to add to it, she takes charge of our house throughout the winter, living absolutely alone, and doing what work is necessary.'"

But perhaps the girl of the next rank of life gives the finest picture of the capability of a Frenchwoman—the girl who belongs to the business, and, above all, to the shop-keeping, class. She is excellent when working for employers—careful, punctual, steady as a rock; but if managing her own affairs, then she shines out in full

AN ONION SELLER

glory. She may be married, and her husband's name over the door, but there is never any doubt for a moment as to the hand at the wheel. She rules supreme, and rules with as much skill as power. "The Frenchwoman possesses in a wholly unsurpassed degree the various aptitudes that shine in domestic and business management. She is never at a loss, never muddle-headed, always more than able to hold her own."

In the family her dominion is just as absolute. In this country of the Salic law—where no woman could sit on the throne—she reigns alike in château and in cottage. Her children may be grown up, be middle-aged, may have children of their own, but her authority still remains, and her word has immense weight in every matter which affects the family.

CHAPTER IX

THE FRENCH BOY

We have said that the French girl does not enjoy the freedom of her English sister. The case is just the same with the French boy. He, too, is watched both at home and at school far more closely than boys are watched in England. The treatment which English boys receive, the confidence, the trust which is placed in them, has no counterpart on the other side of the Channel. The English ideal is that of a frank, open, manly lad, who can go anywhere and do anything, and

manage his own affairs, and be trusted all the time. But in France a boy is expected to be silent, obedient, to do nothing without the word of command.

The vast majority of French boys whose parents do not belong to the labouring classes are educated in the lycée, the French public school. But it is a school very unlike an English public school. The lycée is a huge building like a barrack, and the discipline is that of the barrack-room. The pupils wear a sort of uniform, and are kept under constant and severe control. The lesson hours are long, the play hours are few. And where do they play? The answer is that, until very recently, they did not play. The lycée had no playing fields, no football or cricket ground, no fives or tennis courts. The only ground for recreation is the cour, a large bare yard.

"How do you amuse yourselves during recreation hours?" asked an English visitor of the inmate of a large lycée. "We walk up and down and talk," was the reply. In many French schools of the present day that still remains the chief amusement, to walk up and down and talk; but in others English ideas are being introduced, and the boys are taking gaily to cricket and football.

Even in the playground the French boy does not enjoy freedom. One of the ushers is present all the time watching the boys, and charged to report on all that he sees or can overhear. This is the much-hated pion, whom the boys regard as a spy. He is feared as much as he is disliked, for a bad report from him will often get a boy into serious trouble.

The spirit of the discipline in a lycée is well shown

in the following illustration given by a well-known French writer: "One half-holiday I had brought back a rose, and, wishing to keep it as long as possible, I put it in a glass of water inside my desk.

"I could not help looking from time to time at my treasure—a crime, I admit. For roses speak, but not in Latin. They say all sorts of forbidden things, they invite little boys to run about in country lanes, they incite to rebellion. You never see an usher sniff a flower. Flowers do not bloom on the schoolmaster's ruler. Well, I harboured my rose, just as an anarchist harbours his bomb. When I opened my desk to give the poor flower air, a ray of sunshine bathed it, seemed to kiss it. A dark shadow suddenly blotted out the beam, a big hand seized my splendid rose; in another second it lay in the courtyard below. Justice was satisfied!"

This treatment tends to make French boys silent, reserved, and subdued in nature. "No romantic and daring idea ever forms itself in a French boy's head to run away to sea, to descend from his bedroom by the rain-pipe, or anything of that kind. One never sees him with torn knickerbockers, scratched legs, or a dirty face. He doesn't risk his life twenty times a day with the same reckless joy that a British boy does, and on the whole he is not so brave or so plucky. He is shut up in a school like a barrack, dressed in a shapeless uniform. Knowledge is crammed into his unwilling head all day. He has no games, no football, scarcely any holidays, and grows up sallow, unmuscular, mischievous, but extremely clever. If he can't hold his

own with a small Britisher in the playground, he certainly makes up for it in the schoolroom."

The last sentence of the above extract puts clearly the strong point of the lycée. In books and thought the French boy is, as a rule, far ahead of the British boy of the same age. The English lad of seventeen or eighteen has very often little to say for himself, and can take but a small share in a conversation on general subjects. His French comrade will talk freely, express clear and intelligent opinions, and reason ably upon disputed points. Much of this power is owing, without doubt, to the walks and talks and unending tasks of the lycée.

Well, the barrack life of the lycée passes, and the young Frenchman then has to enter the real barracks and don the hated uniform of the conscript. This experience, too, passes, and, with a great sigh of relief, he steps out into the world again, a free man, with his life before him.

And what is he like, this Frenchman who has now finished his training of school and army? In the first place, he is not in the least like the idea commonly formed of him in English minds. There is a general belief among us that the Frenchman is a gay, laughter-loving person, who whistles all care down the wind, and lets trouble slide from his shoulders as water slides from the feathers of a duck. This is not so. There is no more serious nation in the world than the French. A Frenchman, it is true, is far more lively in speech and in action than an Englishman. He uses a thousand gestures where an Englishman would not use one at all. But this is on the surface, and of the

surface; the mind below remains that of his nature and training—very reserved, opening itself rarely to friends, almost never to a stranger.

But, for all that, the stranger will find him most delightful company, for from childhood he has been trained to please. He has the greatest horror of being thought impolite or unamiable. You may break out upon him with the most fearful and wonderful French, but he will never laugh, never permit himself even the faintest smile, at your blunders. He will not allow himself to use a word which would hurt your feelings and to be blunt and uncourteous appears to him little less than a crime.

Another point is that you will never find him in a hurry. He makes up his mind slowly, and turns a question over from every point of view before he comes to a decision. Even in business there is not the feverish rush of English towns and American cities. In handicrafts and manufactures it is the same, and this quiet, steady work, "without haste, without rest," gives the beautiful articles of exquisite finish for which the French worker is famous.

Finally, in business the Frenchman is a man of his word. An English manufacturer remarks: "The French are excellent customers, but are very slow in making up their minds. The French buyer will turn over an article a dozen times, go away without giving an order, will look in next day, very likely the day after that, before coming to a decision. But French commercial honour stands at high-water mark; thus, dilatory as are French buyers, none receives a warmer welcome."

CHAPTER X

THE FRENCH PEASANT

THE French peasantry, the French labouring classes, are the backbone of France, and in their hands lies a great proportion of the wealth of the country. It is not that each has a great deal, but each has something. In the first place, we must not think of the French peasant as resembling in position the English labourer, for he does not. Both wear rough clothes, both work hard in the fields; but one is working for himself, the other is working for his master, and that difference means a great deal.

The French peasant may look even poorer than an English labourer, for he is very careful, and wears his clothes to the last shred, but he is, in reality, immensely better off. France is a land of peasant proprietors. Each tills his own plot of land with the greatest care and industry. Some have only one or two acres, some as much as thirty or forty; but all make a living, and all save a part of their incomes to provide for old age. This care for the future is strongly marked in the French character, and nowhere more so than among the peasantry. The English workhouse—the "union"—has no place among them; they provide for themselves.

A peasant who has from five to six acres will make a very comfortable living. He has his vineyard, his orchard, his pastures, and his cornfields. He grows a little of everything that he needs; he rears pigs and

poultry. He always takes two crops a year from the land, and often three. On the smaller holdings the spade takes the place of the plough, and not an inch of soil is wasted. Where there is no room for a tree, there is a bush; if no room for a bush, there is a plant. And the whole is kept in the most perfect neatness and order; not a weed is to be seen. The variety of crops grown on a small farm often forms a striking sight. "Dazzling indeed is the peasant's patchwork from April till November. Sky-blue flax, dark green hemp, crimson clover, bright yellow colza, golden wheat, the stately Indian corn with its deep-hued, waxen green leaves and rich orange-coloured seeds, the creamy-blossomed buckwheat—all these flourish side by side, and often on a farm of two or three acres."

As we have said, the French peasant not only makes a living, he also saves money. This money he either lays out in fresh purchases of land or invests in the public funds. It is a striking sight to see a bank in a country town on the day when the dividends become due. It is packed with country-people, the men in blue blouses, the women in plain homespun dresses, but each a small capitalist and a fund-holder.

All this tends to make a country not only prosperous, but very stable. When the vast bulk of the population hold land or money in public funds, they have a very direct interest in the maintenance of peace and order and of public security. A striking proof of the wealth of France was seen after the war with Germany more than thirty years ago. The victorious Germans demanded from France the vast sum of 200 millions sterling.

It was paid promptly, and the chief proportion of this sum came from the earnings and savings of the workers of France—the peasant, the artisan, the servant in town or country, for all save.

What is the reason of this wonderful prosperity of the French peasant? A famous English traveller, more than 100 years ago, put his finger upon it. In 1787 Arthur Young wrote: "I was much struck with a large tract of land, seemingly nothing but huge rocks, yet most of it enclosed and planted with the most industrious attention. Every man has an olive, a mulberry, an almond, or a peach tree, and vines scattered among them, so that the whole ground is covered with the oddest mixture of these plants and bulging rocks that can be conceived. Such a knot of active husbandmen, who turn their rocks into scenes of fertility—because, I suppose, THEIR OWN, would do the same by the wastes (near at hand) if animated by the same omnipotent principle." And again he remarks of another spot: "An activity has been here that has swept away all difficulties before it, and has clothed the very rocks with verdure. It would be a disgrace to common sense to ask the cause; the enjoyment of property *must* have done it. Give a man the secure possession of a bleak rock, and he will turn it into a garden."

That is the secret. The French peasant works for himself, and enjoys the fruit of his own labours. Thus he is willing to labour early and late, to make the desert blossom like the rose, to cultivate his soil to the last grape, the last ear of corn.

The Young Conscript

CHAPTER XI

THE YOUNG CONSCRIPT

MANY an English boy thinks he would like to be a soldier, to march with a sword at his side, a rifle on his shoulder, while he and his comrades keep step with the merry tap-tap of the drum. But the French boy has to be a soldier whether he likes it or not, and every day which carries him towards manhood brings him nearer to the time when he must enter barracks and undergo a military training.

Every Frenchman is trained to arms, and between the ages of twenty and forty-five is expected to be ready at any moment to take the field on behalf of his country. Why is this? Why should it be necessary for every Frenchman to be a soldier, while in our country only those enter the army who please to do so?

The reason is simple. France is open to attack, and needs a great army to defend her frontiers; we are protected by the sea. Before an enemy could reach our shores, he must first have destroyed our splendid navy; but as long as our great battleships guard our shores, we are safe from assault. Not so in France. For hundreds of miles she lies side by side with other countries.

Here is a cornfield; it is in France. There is a green meadow; it is in Germany. What is to prevent a German army marching into France? Nothing but strong forts held by French troops. And

so France needs many soldiers, and every man is expected to learn the use of arms.

This system of compelling every citizen to be a soldier is known as conscription, and those who are serving their period of training are known as conscripts. Upon attaining the age of twenty, each young man has to enter barracks and undergo two years' training. After that he is liable to military service until he is forty-five, and every four years he has to serve for twenty-eight days in the autumn manœuvres, in order to keep him acquainted with military duties.

The French people do not love conscription ; they submit to it as a necessity. To the conscript himself the life is often hard and unpleasant. It is particularly so for a young man who has left a home of comfort and refinement. He enters the barracks, and finds his liberty gone at a stroke. He must obey this officer and that, observe a multitude of rules, and often suffer severe punishment for very small offences. It very often happens that he does not even get a new uniform. The military authorities are very thrifty, and a partly worn-out uniform is handed on to a new conscript.

Then he finds his quarters unpleasant. He is compelled to share a huge bare dormitory with fifty or sixty others, of all ranks in society. "The pallet next his own may be occupied by some rowdy or vagabond ; on the other side he may have a hard-working but coarse-mannered countryman. Absolute cleanliness is next to impossible in these military caravansaries. In winter the men suffer from cold ; in summer, from heat, flies,

fleas, and worse nuisances. Intense fatigue will at times fail to induce sleep under any circumstances."

But the discomfort caused to the conscript during his term of service is, perhaps, the least serious side of this system—the "blood-tax," as it is bitterly called. Its worst effects are seen in the influence it has over the lives of the young men called up. The hard-working country lad, the farmer, the herdsman, the carter, is brought into a large town at a time of his life when new habits are easily formed and new desires quickly spring up. When his term of service is over, he has, very possibly, been quite spoilt for his former simple life in his native village. He does not return thither, but hangs about the town to which he has become attached, swelling the ranks of casual labourers, while his native fields are needing hands for their tillage.

The sufferings of the conscript destroy, as a rule, all his charmed notions of a soldier's life. Here and there may be found a young fellow who has enjoyed his term, but, speaking generally, the conscript looks back upon his years of service with keen dislike. He regards war as it should be regarded, with hatred and loathing, and this is proved by the fact that no nation of the present day is a more passionate lover of peace than France. Her sons know what soldiering means, and they have no desire for it.

CHAPTER XII

ALONG THE LOIRE

It is in the South of Brittany that the great and famous River Loire pours its waters into the Bay of Biscay. Near its mouth stands the large port of Nantes, a spacious and regular city, with fine old houses looking down upon the Loire.

Nantes is a famous town in French history. In 1598 Henry IV. of France issued the Edict of Nantes, which gave freedom of worship to the French Protestants, the Huguenots. In 1685 the Edict was revoked by Louis XIV., and a great emigration of Huguenots followed. Many crossed the Channel to England in search of religious freedom. They settled in our midst in great numbers, for between 1670 and 1690 no fewer than 80,000 French Protestants came to England. They were well received, and well did they earn their welcome, for as skilful workers and honest, steady tradesmen they were the very salt of France. They introduced new methods and often new trades. Our silk-weaving, the making of sailcloth, paper, hats, and many other things, improved immensely under the skilful handling and teaching of these refugees.

In 1793 Nantes comes again into history as the scene of the terrible noyades, the drownings. Among the dreadful cruelties of the French Revolution there was none more shocking than the noyades in the Loire at Nantes. La Vendée, a district to the south of Nantes,

rose against the First Republic after the execution of Louis XVII. The rising was put down in the most ferocious manner. A monster, named Carrier, seized great numbers of innocent people—men and women—and bound them together, and set them afloat on rafts and sank them in the river. In this cruel way thousands of people were put to death in cold blood.

The broad river which brings so much wealth to Nantes also brings much danger in time of autumn floods. Miss Betham-Edwards says: "A fairy scene is the Loire on a warm July day. As the traveller slowly steams from Angers to Nantes, amid flowery banks and low-lying meads, it is difficult to believe that a few months later all may disappear, only the loftiest tree-tops being visible above the engulfing waters. An unforgettable, unimaginable sight is an inundation of the Loire: Nantes, the Liverpool of Western France, suddenly turned into a second Venice; locomotion in its busy streets only possible by boat; far away, looking seaward, the terrified townsfolk behold vista upon vista of gradually vanishing islets—holiday haunts in summer—riverside villages, and verdant hills; church bells are set ringing, brave sailors haste to the rescue, no power is able to stem the deluge."

Angers, the town just mentioned, was the capital of the old province of Anjou—a name of much importance in our history, for hence sprang the great House of Anjou, the Plantagenet line of Kings.

We are now entering one of the richest and most beautiful districts of France, the land which is called emphatically the "garden of France." Here are no

barren heaths, no wild moorlands along the course of the noble stream. The banks and low-lying meads are rich with flowers, the fields are filled with abundant crops, the grapes ripen in the sun, there is a wealth and profusion of the good things which Nature provides for man that is truly astonishing.

In this fertile land the eye is charmed by scenes of rural plenty rather than by striking effects of landscape. Cornfields, orchards, vineyards, gardens, and woods succeed each other, or are mingled together in delightful confusion. And amid the pleasant scene flows the broad, stately flood of the Loire, moving through its full banks to the sea.

A writer, speaking of the abundance of this land, remarks : " Alike rich and poor can dispense with the shop and the market in Maine and Loire. Everything for comfort and grace is at their hands in larder and clothes-presses. At my friend's house no more shopping was done than if she were living on a desert island. Besides the stores of home-grown wine, spirits, and liqueurs and essences (the delicate orange-flower among them), there were jams and jellies enough to stock a grocer's shop, walnut oil, raisin vinegar, honey, home-made medicines, stimulants, ointments, home-spun linen—everything for use but shoes and stationery. Of course, there were cows, affording cream and butter ; a well-stocked poultry-yard ; calves and sheep. In addition to these, fish from neighbouring streams, and, of course, fruit and vegetables in abundance. Everything flourishes—strawberries, peaches, figs, mulberries, grapes, peas, asparagus, salads of all kinds ;

none of these good things being mere dainties for elegantly appointed tables."

On we go up-stream, and reach Tours, the chief town of Touraine, the province which, above all others, is said to be the most French in France. "Normandy is Normandy, Burgundy is Burgundy, Provence is Provence; but Touraine is essentially France." Touraine was the heart of the old French monarchy: it was beloved by the French Kings, and along the banks of the Loire rise stately palaces, fortresses, and châteaux, where they held their Courts or took their pleasures in splendid and picturesque fashion.

It is said that the native of Touraine is very unwilling to leave his province, even to view another part of France. This must be because he feels himself so well off where he is that any change would be for the worse. He has a delightful climate, a rich and fruitful country, dotted with pleasant towns and villages, joined by wide, smooth roads, and the majestic Loire winding its broad band of silver through the landscape. "The vineyards and orchards look rich in the fresh, gay light; cultivation is everywhere, and everywhere it seems to be easy. There is no visible poverty; thrift and success present themselves as matters of good taste. The white caps of the women glitter in the sunshine, and their well-made sabots click cheerfully on the hard, clean roads."

Tours itself is a very charming little city, with its gardens and walks along the Loire, its pleasant country houses lying amid vines on the banks of the stream,

and its handsome suburb of Saint-Symphorian reached by a magnificent bridge which stretches across the river. It has a fine cathedral and some noble churches. The most famous of the latter has been destroyed save for a couple of huge towers. This was the Church of St. Martin, built in memory of the missionary-Bishop who converted the Gauls in the fourth century. For many ages the shrine of St. Martin was an object of pilgrimage, and its church became a splendid building, filled with a multitude of precious offerings. It was attacked and pillaged more than once, but rose again to its former splendour, until it fell for ever in the stormy days of the French Revolution.

St. Martin was not only a missionary, but a warrior also, and for many generations his name was invoked in battle by his followers. To him was ascribed the glory of the great victory won near Tours by Charles Martel—Charles the Hammer—in 732. At that time the Saracen hosts were overrunning Europe, and the Cross seemed to be steadily sinking before the Crescent. The march of the invader was stayed at Tours, where a tremendous pitched battle took place between Christian and Saracen. The victory went to that hard hitter Charles the Hammer, and he dashed the foe to pieces and drove them before him. This battle saved Europe from Arab domination, and Dr. Arnold speaks of it as "among those signal deliverances which have affected for centuries the happiness of mankind."

The fight raged in the great plain which lies to the south of Tours, a plain famous for historic struggles, for on the farther side lies Poitiers, of glorious memory,

FRENCH FAMILY AT BREAKFAST.

where the Black Prince, with his little band of men-at-arms and bowmen, overthrew the great army of France and took King John himself prisoner.

Poitiers itself is a straggling town on a steep hill-side. On every side but one it rises sharply from the plain, and a little river winds round the base of the hill. This position made it, in former days, a fortress of commanding strength. To-day the steep slopes are laid out in pleasant winding walks, which give charming prospects over the wide and fertile plain, noted for its rich black soil, on which immense crops are grown.

CHAPTER XIII

ALONG THE LOIRE (*continued*)

FROM Tours the visitor often makes a short journey to the south-east to see the gloomy prison-castle of Loches. The quaint little town of Loches stands on the beautiful River Indre, a tributary of the Loire, and it is chiefly visited by those who wish to see the dungeons where Louis XI. used to bury alive his prisoners of State. These are in the castle, a huge building, which crowns the summit of a hill beside the river. Into the dungeons you may descend by ladders, and the guides carry torches to light up the fearful gloom, but there were no torches for the prisoners of Louis XI. in the fifteenth century. They were shut up in these horrible prisons, in utter darkness, at an immense distance

below the pleasant daylight and the cheerful sounds of human life. No cry of theirs could pierce the vast thickness of the gloomy walls, no sound could reach them in their living graves.

In wide contrast to these prisons were others formed of iron cages, hung out upon the walls of the castle in the open air. But in one way these cages were more painful than the vaults, for they were made with such cunning cruelty that the unhappy victim within could neither stand up nor lie down. In one of these cages Cardinal La Balue, a former favourite of Louis XI., was shut up for eleven years, and the hooks to which his cage was hung may still be seen fixed in the walls of the castle.

Above Tours the River Loire flows down through a wide plain, called La Sologne. The great river is loaded with sediment washed into it from this broad, flat, muddy region, and here and there it throws down this load in the form of mud-banks, which often obstruct its path. This causes frequent inundations, and the land is protected by huge dykes. These dykes are often so high that the traveller may pass up or down stream and fail to see the villages hidden behind the tall bank.

But for a long distance the stream is guarded by a natural barrier, a splendid cliff, of which Victor Hugo says: "The Loire has its beauties. Its most picturesque and imposing feature is an immense limestone wall, mixed with sandstone, millstone, and potter's clay, which encloses its right bank, and stretches from Tours to Blois with an inexpressible variety and beauty, now wild rock, now like an English garden

covered with trees and flowers, crowned with ripening vines and smoking chimneys, perforated like a sponge, teeming with life like an ant-heap. There are the deep caverns, once the hidden lairs of the false coiners. To-day the rude openings of these caves are filled with pretty casements, neatly set into the rock, and from time to time you catch a glimpse through the glass of some young lass packing boxes of aniseed, angelica, and coriander. The coiner is replaced by the confectioner."

On the way to Blois we pass the magnificent castle of Amboise, which rises in the most stately fashion above the river. The pretty little white town of Amboise clusters along the river-bank, its houses leaning, as it were, against the dark rock which springs up to form a pedestal for the noble building which spreads its terraces and battlements above. Amboise is interesting within and without. It was a favourite residence of the French Kings, above all in the sixteenth century, and here Mary Stuart, afterwards Queen of Scots, stayed with her mother-in-law, the wicked Catherine de' Medici, she whose hands were dipped deeply in the Huguenot blood shed in the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

Amboise has been a castle, a palace, and a prison. Here have been shut up Queens and Princes who had offended a jealous and suspicious ruler. Many have given up their lives within its walls to the headsman's axe, and a balcony is shown whose iron railings were once decorated in grim fashion with the heads of Huguenots. This was in 1560, when the latter made a plot against the authorities; the plot was discovered,

and the plotters hunted down and slain. Then there is a low doorway in a wall at the end of a terrace, which is always pointed out to the visitor, for the stone above it caused the death of a King. In 1498 Charles VIII. was passing through it, when he struck his head so violently against the top, that he died from the effects of the blow.

The romantic and chivalrous Francis I. is the hero of another story. He was passionately fond of hunting, and one day, on the occasion of a festival, he ordered the huntsmen to bring into a court of the castle an enormous wild-boar which they had taken alive. The animal was to be baited to death for the amusement of the ladies. But the huge, savage beast broke loose, and made a fierce charge upon a door, burst it open, and rushed up a stairway. With bristles erect and foaming tusks, it rushed through a velvet curtain into an apartment where a throng of frightened ladies would have been easy victims to the infuriated creature. But the King drew his sword and faced the savage animal. He avoided its first onset skilfully, goaded it to a fresh attack, and then slew it with a single stroke of his sword.

From every side, every angle, the views commanded by this noble château are most magnificent. On all hands stretches the richest portion of the garden of France, vineyards, cornfields, pastures, all teeming with verdure and fertility, the prospect enriched by clumps of fine woodland and enlivened by hamlets, villages, church spires, and charming country houses, while the Loire—always the great feature of the scene—

spreads its shining flood in a wide band of silver running through the landscape.

Even perhaps more famous than Amboise is the great castle of Blois, some distance farther up stream. The Château de Blois is built on a hill which springs from the river, and is one of the most splendid buildings in France. Its history is almost the history of French monarchy, so many Kings have dwelt within its walls, some adding to its towers or terraces, some marking their presence by a famous, or often an infamous, deed.

The hill of Blois has always been a stronghold, and traces of a Roman camp have been discovered. Then the height was crowned by a strong feudal castle, with its grim keep and its immensely thick walls. This castle passed into the hands of the Kings of France, and the gloomy fortress was transformed into a gay and splendid palace, whose capitals, balconies, windows, chimneys, are all decorated with the richest, the most beautiful carving in stone. "It is covered with an embroidery of sculpture in which every detail is worthy of the hand of a goldsmith." There is a wonderful wing built by Francis I., where stands a marvellous winding stairway. This staircase is built of stone, and rises in the form of a great spiral; its sides are not closed, and the stairs are open to the air. It is carved most beautifully and elaborately, and is looked upon as a masterpiece of its time and style.

To mention all the things this grand old château has been would be to write the history of France for six centuries, but if there be one event which stands out before the others it would be the murder of the Duke

of Guise, in 1588. Henry, Duke of Guise, was the most powerful nobleman in France, head of a great family who held much power. The King at that time was Henry III., son of Catherine de' Medici, a man both weak and wicked. Hating and fearing the Duke of Guise, the King formed a plot to assassinate him, and the murder was carried out at Blois. A band of assassins, admitted by a secret stair, crept upon the Duke, and despatched him with many blows of dagger and sword.

The historical consequences of this crime were of great importance. The next year saw the death of Henry III. himself, and the heir to the throne was now Henry of Navarre, a Protestant. The Guises had been the chief supporters of the Roman Catholic party, but now that the great Duke was murdered, Henry of Navarre secured the throne, and for four years France had a Huguenot King. Then in 1593 Henry became a Catholic. Paris refused to accept him as a Protestant, and, said Henry in careless jest, "Paris is worth a Mass."

CHAPTER XIV

ALONG THE LOIRE (*continued*)

FROM the terrace of Blois you may see in the distance the hundred turrets which crown the Château of Chambord, the third of the great royal châteaux on or near the Loire.

The domain of Chambord belonged originally to the

feudal lords who held Blois. At Chambord they had a hunting-lodge, and the place was of no greater importance until the reign of the romantic and chivalrous Francis I. One evening the gallant King was chatting with a lady in a window-seat of the lodge. "Do you see," said he, "those old moss-grown walls? I will have them overthrown, and I will build for you the most magnificent palace in Europe."

The King kept his word. Nearly 2,000 men were set to work at once, and a splendid palace began to rise upon the banks of a miry stream, amid barren plains and lonely woods. The site has nothing of the splendour of the castles which look over the Loire, and in the days of Francis the spot bore an evil name. "There, the legend tells, resided the famous Black Huntsman, with his fantastic outriders and fantastic hounds. He was a huge hunter of the night, arrayed all in black, and mounted on an enormous black steed, which travelled swifter than the wind. He was always followed by a troop of sable dogs, barking in the gloom, and a multitude of phantom horsemen wearing the sombre livery of darkness. Woe betide the villager that crossed his path. He was doomed to die within the twelve months. During the long nights of autumn, when the gloom was deepest, so soon as the last stroke of midnight had resounded from the belfry of the castle, there was heard a mighty din of men and horses and dogs and horns mingling in the air. Loud clamours re-echoed beneath the clouded sky, now rumbling like a distant torrent, then pealing forth like a clap of thunder. 'It is the Black Huntsman!' was

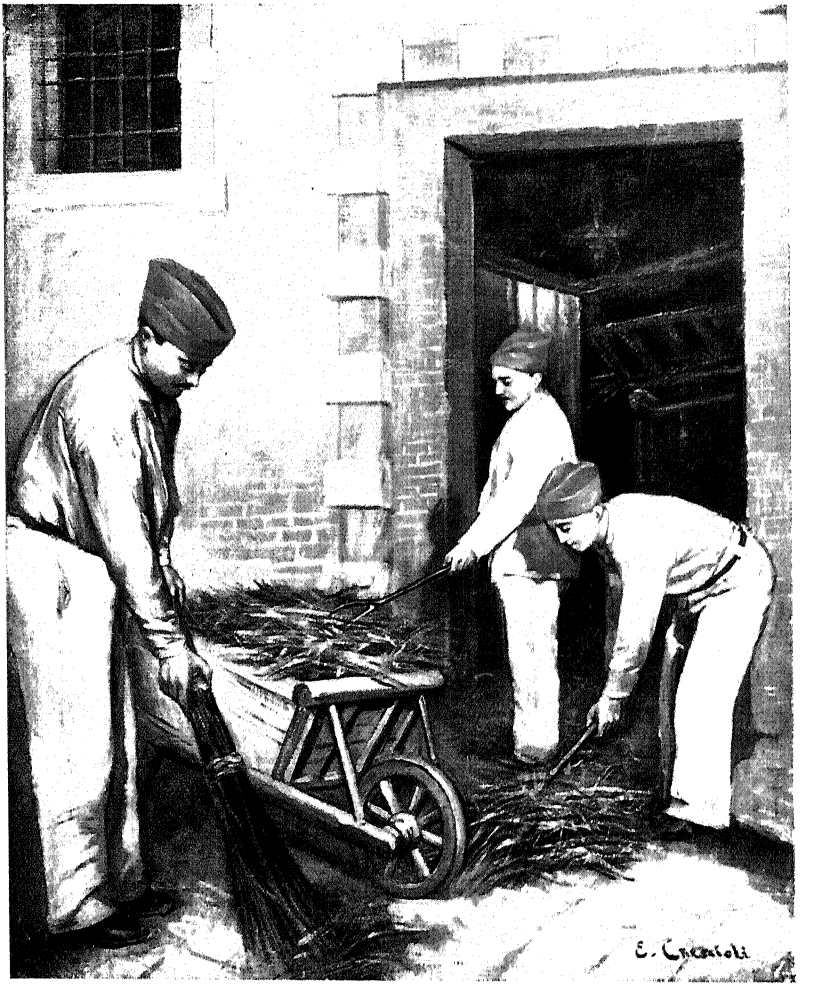
the trembling exclamation on all hands, and the peasants fell upon their knees."

But, despite the ill-omen of the spot, a most stately palace was upreared, and when the last turret was built, about the year 1535, Chambord stood as it stands to-day: a marvellous structure, crowned with a forest of turrets, towers, pinnacles, belfries, columns, chimneys, domes, the whole adorned with the most beautiful and delicate carving, "a poem in stone." "A genius of the East," says Byron, "seems to have stolen this palace from the land of the sun, to hide it in the land of mist with the love of a fair Prince."

The most wonderful thing in this wonderful building is the famous double staircase. It rises in double spirals through the centre of the building. It is open-worked throughout, and though the two flights of stairs wind about each other, they never meet until they reach the top of the building, so that one stream of people may ascend and another descend without meeting. The spirals of the staircases coil themselves about an open-worked pillar, the centre of which is pierced from top to bottom by a tube about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. So perfectly perpendicular are the sides of this tiny well, as it may be called, that if a pebble be dropped into the mouth of it, that pebble will strike the ground 200 feet below without touching the sides.

This wonderful staircase is one of thirteen grand staircases, while more than 200 lesser stairways wind in every direction, to give access to the 444 principal rooms.

Resuming our journey up the Loire, we reach



CONSCRIPTS.

Orleans, a fine city, whose name is well known in English history, for here the heroic Joan of Arc drove the English from the walls of the town in 1429, and earned the title of "Maid of Orleans." Above Orleans the river sweeps round the vast plain of La Sologne, and our course is now southward towards the hills among which the Loire rises.

For a great distance now no town of particular importance lies beside the stream. But an unending picture of fertility, produced by the labour and thrift of the industrious peasantry, is presented on both banks. Cornfields, pastures, fields of blue flax, meadows bright with flowers, vineyards beyond counting, follow each other in constant succession until we reach the town of Nevers, where the river divides into two arms of equal volume. The stream to the left is the Loire, that to the right is the Allier, a tributary which, like the parent stream, flows northward from the heights of the Cevennes.

Beyond Nevers the river ceases to be navigable. It narrows, and becomes a swift foaming stream as it races down from the hills whence it springs. It passes Saint-Étienne, a busy iron-working town, where forges, foundries, and workshops throw stacks of huge chimneys into the air, and overhang the country with a pall of smoke. But above Saint-Étienne we are once more in pure air, bright sunshine, and the scenery becomes grander with every league we travel. Great precipices spring up beside the swift, leaping torrent which the river has now become, and the mountain-sides are clothed thickly with trees—beech, chestnut, and walnut on the lower slopes, larches and stone-pines on the

heights. Up and up we go until we reach the town of Le Puy, with its white houses and its vineyards on the slopes to the sun. From Le Puy a day's walk or drive will carry one to the source of the Loire, nearly 5,000 feet above the sea, and some 500 miles from Nantes, where we started.

We said that the Allier, which came into the parent stream at Nevers, was of equal importance as a river, and a journey of very high interest may be made up this tributary. Upon it lies Vichy, a well-known watering-place, where thousands of visitors congregate in summer to drink the alkaline waters, which bubble up, steaming hot, from some mysterious cauldron of the earth. We are now on the edge of the famous volcanic district of France, and possibly the same power which now pours up the heated waters of Vichy, spread abroad long ago the vast fields of lava which may be seen as we travel on towards the south.

We are now in the ancient province of Auvergne, and around us lies a land which was once torn to pieces by volcanic action. On every side are hills which were once fiery volcanoes. Their shape, the bowl of the ancient crater at the summit, the lip of the crater notched deeply at the point where it broke, and allowed a broad stream of lava to flow down and cover the plain—all the signs of tremendous volcanic outbursts are to be observed. But the eruptions took place long ages ago, and the lava-beds are covered with soil, with rich meadows where sheep and cattle graze quietly, with vineyards and orchards.

The chief town of this district is Clermont-Ferrand,

famous both for its singular position in the heart of the volcanic region and for its historic memories. It was at a great council held at Clermont in 1095 that the First Crusade was resolved upon. There is still to be seen the old church where the council was held, and the broad terrace, where a vast concourse gathered to hear the Pope, Urban II., preach the Crusade. His words were received with the memorable cry : "God wills it! God wills it!" and this was adopted as the battle-cry of the Crusaders.

Clermont is the great centre for excursions to the volcanic peaks which surround it. The highest of them all, the Puy de Dôme, overlooks the town, and every visitor climbs to the top of the cone-like mountain, from the summit of which there is a glorious view. North and south rise the volcanic peaks in wild and tangled confusion, east and west vast plains stretch away to the horizon, seas of verdure and smiling plenty, under the patient and careful tillage of the industrious peasants of Auvergne. On the north side of the great Puy de Dôme there is a smaller height, the little Puy de Dôme, and the immensity of the prospect from the head of the height has caused the following rhyme to become popular among the country people :

"Si Dôme était sur Dôme,
On verrait les portes de Rome."

"If Dôme were on Dôme,
One would see the gates of Rome."

This is of course a pleasant exaggeration, and the view, as it is, is quite ample enough to please all visitors. The

neighbourhood is also famous for Roman remains, and marbles, bronzes, and coins were discovered on the summit of the mountain when workmen were digging out the foundations of an observatory in 1876.

From Puy de Dôme it is easy to cross to another peak, Puy de Pariva, noted for its finely shaped crater, 300 feet deep, 1,000 feet across, shaped like a bowl, and lined with grassy turf, a vast green cup. "It is a singular spectacle to see a herd of cattle quietly grazing above the orifice where such furious explosions once broke forth. Their foot-tracks round the shelving side of the basin, in steps rising one above the other, like the seats of an amphitheatre, make the excessive regularity of the circular basin more remarkable."

CHAPTER XV

THE COUNTRY OF THE CAMISARDS

As we ascend the Allier we again rise toward the rugged heights of the Cevennes, the country of the Camisards, famous in the religious wars which tore France to pieces —the struggles between Catholic and Huguenot.

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes had driven vast numbers of Huguenots from France, there was a formidable Protestant rising in Languedoc, among the Cevennes mountains. The peasants of the Cevennes had no means to fly to other lands in search of religious freedom ; further, like all highlanders, they loved their

wild uplands too much to leave them. So they clung both to their heights and to their faith.

Before long, persecution was busy among them. When it was found that they defied the Edict and continued to worship in their Protestant fashion, force was employed to turn them from their ways. Their meeting-places among the hills were hunted out, the worshippers seized and flung into prison. Many were put to death, many were exiled, many suffered torture, but none surrendered his faith. These Huguenots became known as "the Church of the Desert," for they were driven to worship in secret corners of rocky glens, in "dens and caves of the earth," on the summits of bare hills, where no enemy could creep upon them unseen.

At last these hunted, persecuted folk became driven beyond themselves, and fell into strange moods, when they saw visions, heard voices, and began to "prophesy." They were beside their minds with grief and rage and fierce zeal for their religion. In 1702, after nearly twenty years of hanging and burning and imprisonment, matters came to a head, and the war of the Camisards began at a little town called Pont de Montvert.

Here dwelt the leader of the persecution, a priest named Chayla. This man himself had known persecution. In his youth he had been a missionary in China. Then he had been attacked and left for dead, but was brought back to life by the kindness of a poor native. Now he had become a persecutor in turn. In his house at Pont de Montvert he shut up the Huguenots who fell into his hands and put them to

torture, plucking out the hairs of the beard, and closing the fingers upon live coals.

Suddenly the hunted turned upon the hunters. On a July night in the year 1702, a band of Camisards swept down upon the little town, released the prisoners of Chayla, and put Chayla himself to death.

This affair was the spark which kindled a great fire. The Camisards flew to arms everywhere, and resolved to openly defy their persecutors. A most savage struggle followed. "In that labyrinth of hills a war of bandits, a war of wild beasts, raged between the Grand Monarch with all his troops and Marshals on the one hand, and a few thousand Protestant mountaineers on the other." No quarter was shown on either side. Every Camisard taken in arms was shot out of hand, and the Camisards took fearful vengeance upon their foes when victory lay upon their side. The name Camisard was given to the peasant troops from the camise, the shirt or blouse which was their only uniform.

The handful of mountaineers made a wonderful stand against the overwhelming numbers of troops flung upon them. In doing this they were greatly aided by their knowledge of the wild, rugged hills amid which the bitter struggle was fought out; but in 1705 the troops finished their work, and the last Camisard band was broken up. Strangely enough, the place which had seen the first incident of the war saw also the last. Pont de Montvert had seen the death of Chayla: it saw the death of the last Camisard leader. He was being carried to prison by the royal troopers when he broke

loose, leaped over the bridge, and attempted to escape. He was shot down in the stream.

But though the war was over, the persecution continued for many years. In 1762 a Huguenot pastor was hanged at Toulouse simply as a Huguenot, and in the same year and at the same town a blameless old man, named Jean Calas, was put to death by being broken on the wheel, a most dreadful torture. The old man was a Protestant ; his son had joined the Roman Catholic Church. The son committed suicide by hanging himself, and the father was falsely accused of bringing about the young man's death, because the latter had changed his religious opinions. In the end the innocence of Jean Calas was proved, and the fanatic madness against him of his fellow-townsmen was shown to be without cause or reason.

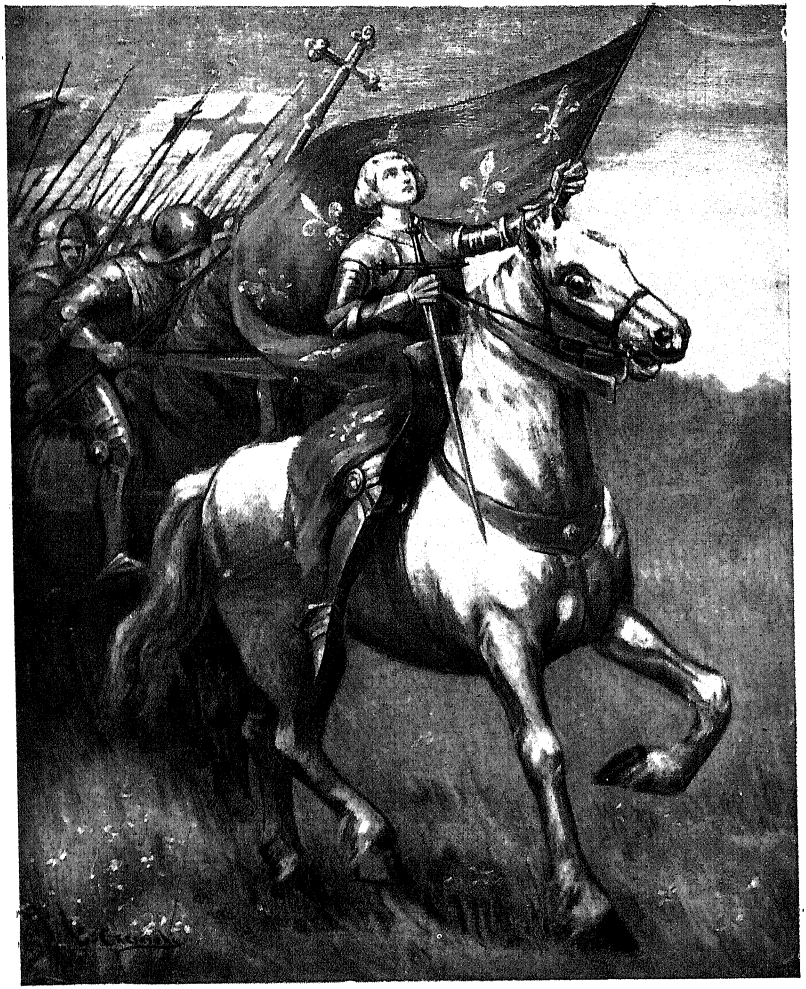
Again, at the little fortress town of Aigues-Mortes, the town of "Dead Waters," standing on a lagoon beside the Mediterranean, may be seen a vast round tower, the Tour de Constance. For nearly 100 years this served as the chief prison in France for Huguenot women. Most of them were the wives of merchants or men of property, whose husbands had been sent to the galleys. The place was very unhealthy, and the prisoners died in great numbers, but there were some who survived the confinement for many years. "When prisoners died off, the dungeon was at once filled up again with more victims ; and the tower was rarely, if ever, empty, down to a period within only a few years before the outbreak of the French Revolution."

The country of the Camisards is not beautiful as a

whole. The Cevennes form vast stretches of wild, bleak moorland or rough stony hill-side, in places grand and stern, but often sterile and uninteresting. But here and there glens of rare beauty cut their way among the hills, each with its little shining river and its fertile lower slopes clothed with groves of olive, mulberry, or chestnut, with cornfields, meadows, orchards, and vineyards.

But among the wild solitudes of the Cevennes there is one extraordinary region to which visitors now flock in numbers; it is only of late years that it has become generally known. This is the district known as the Causses, a region of wild and picturesque ravines, of limestone crags, weather- and water-worn into the most remarkable shapes; of wide tablelands, burning, sterile, and solitary in the short summer; white with snow through a long, terrible winter. "The most extraordinary features of the Causses are the underground avens or abysses, lakes, and rivers, often at a depth of 200 or 300 feet from the surface, some, indeed, much deeper, and all of recent discovery. The accounts of subterranean exploration in these regions reads more like a page of romance than sober reality—two miles of underground punting, grotto after grotto, cavern after cavern, and, lit up by magnesium light, offering fairy scenes. Here, indeed, runs a river—

> "'Through caverns measureless to man
> Down to a sunless sea.'"



JOAN OF ARC.

CHAPTER XVI

AMONG THE VINEYARDS

FRANCE, broadly speaking, is often divided into three belts of production: the north is the land of cornfields and orchards, of wheat and cider; the centre is the home of the vine; the south is the district where the olive pours forth oil, and the mulberry feeds the silk-worm. But, like all broad definitions, this statement is far from exact. The vine, for instance, is by no means confined to the central belt of the country; it runs up north and mingles with the apples; it runs down south and is quite at home among the olives. Still, it is to the centre of France that we must turn to find the most famous vineyards, and none are more renowned than those which cover the slopes of the Côte d'Or (the Golden Slope), a hilly region of Eastern France, a part of the land forming the province of Burgundy.

At first glance the soil of the Golden Slope does not give promise of producing the grape of grapes whence is pressed the rich wine of Burgundy. It is shaly and stony, and huge rocks spring up here and there, even in the very vineyards. But there is some quality in the soil which gives the grape a peculiar richness, and the land is cultivated with the utmost care.

The grapes are grown in stone-walled enclosures, called clos, some of them of large size, as much as fifteen acres being walled round to form a single vine-

yard. The favourite places to form clos are at the bases of the hills, where the plain gently rises to the lower slopes, and the grapes are exposed to the full heat of the ripening sunshine. Higher up terraces are formed, and every inch of the hill-side is put to some useful purpose. Here may be seen to the full the laborious care and thrift of the peasant owner. Not an inch of soil is wasted, not a weed is allowed to cumber the ground. The main crop is the vine, and to this all else must give way. The best spot is selected, the best cultivation is given to the precious trees. But between the rows of vines the land is put to many purposes, growing heavy crops of vegetables and small fruit, anything and everything which will not take air and sunshine from the noble bunches of grapes which hang above.

Where the land is not suitable for the vine it is turned to other purposes, and splendid crops of corn, of clover, of lucerne and mangel are grown. So rich and fruitful is this country that it supports a large population, and villages and hamlets are clustered thickly together. The houses show the prosperity of their owners. They are well built and clean, and every house has a good cellar to store the abundant yield of wine.

The chief town of the Côte d'Or is Dijon, a pretty and charming place, delightful in the summer, but very cold in winter, for it lies open to icy winds blowing from the Alps. It has three old and curious industries: the making of mustard, gingerbread, and pills. Dijon mustard is famous for its piquant flavour, and this is

owing to two things. First, the mustard-plants are grown on cleared charcoal-beds in the forests of the neighbourhood. In these haunts of the charcoal-burners no other plants could be sown ; the rabbits and wild-boars would soon make an end of them. But these creatures will not touch a leaf of the mustard-plant. The soil gives one flavour, and another is gained by mixing the powder with the juice of new wine made from unripe grapes, and the grapes must be just at a certain stage of unripeness, or the flavour is lost.

Dijon gingerbread has been famous since the Middle Ages. It is made of honey, rye-flour, and spice, and is sent all over France. The pills of Dijon have even a wider sale than the gingerbread. The French take immense quantities of pills, and at Dijon they are turned out by machinery in vast numbers. At Dijon may be seen great cellars stored with huge vats of Burgundy wine, but the chief centre of the wine trade lies at Beaune, a little to the south, "the headquarters of vintners, cellarmen, and coopers."

Travelling north from the rocky slopes of the Côte d'Or, we come to the broad plains through which runs the River Marne, a tributary of the Seine. Here are the fields of Champagne, the home of another noted wine. The centre of the champagne-growing district is Epernay, a pleasant town standing at the entrance of a beautiful and fertile valley near the banks of the Marne. Epernay is famous for its immense caves hollowed out of the chalk hills. In these vast, cool grottos are stored millions of bottles of champagne, ready to be sent to every part of the world. These

caverns stretch to so great a distance in the heart of the hills, that it is said to be a full day's journey to walk from end to end of them.

Not far from Epernay lies Rheims, famous for its splendid cathedral, where the Kings of France were crowned. The cathedral is the great glory of that famous and ancient city. "There is an endless store of interest in the magnificent towers, covered with figures to the very top, the forest of spires elaborately ornamented, the fretted doors and glowing windows. The interior is amazingly vast and grand, immensely long, of enormous width, the pillars and arches stupendous, the painted glass magnificent, and the form of the windows exquisite : their numbers extraordinary and their colours gorgeous. The great rose window, however, eclipses all the rest by its excelling radiance : molten rubies, emeralds, and sapphires seem glowing through the rich stonework, and when the setting sun shines full upon that window, it is impossible to conceive anything so lustrous and splendid."

Now we will strike away to the south-west towards the shores of the Bay of Biscay, where the rivers Garonne and Dordogne pour into the huge estuary of the Gironde, and the important town of Bordeaux stands on the former stream. Bordeaux is a large, prosperous, handsome town. Its broad quays are finely built, and are thronged with shipping. Many of these vessels will be loaded with the claret which Bordeaux exports to every part of the world, and much of this famous wine is grown on the banks of the Garonne. "The country all about Bordeaux is covered

with precious vineyards, and as you look over to the hills beyond the Garonne, you see them in the autumn sunshine, fretted with the rusty richness of this or that immortal clos."

The finest vineyards are found on the banks of the Gironde, between Bordeaux and the sea, in the celebrated district of the Médoc. The names of some of these vineyards are familiar everywhere, for their wines are called by them, and they produce the finest claret in the world.

In autumn the vineyards of France present a scene both of great beauty and of the busiest industry. The foliage of the vine is glorious in a thousand mingled tints, and in shelter of the broad leaves hang the great bunches of grapes, richly stained with purple and gold by the ripening sun. Up and down between the rows of vines move the busy gatherers. Men, women, and children, all are at work plucking the rich harvest. Baskets are quickly filled and emptied into the great tubs which are wheeled up and down. The tubs, when filled, are carried off to the wine-press, where the grapes will be drained of their precious juice. From the poorer sorts will be made the vin du pays (the wine of the country), the universal drink of French country-people; from the finer, the wine will be carefully stored in cask or bottle to sell to the merchants. Thus the vineyard both stores the cellar and fills the pocket of the French farmer.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LANDES

RUNNING to the south from the wide estuary of the Gironde, there is a long, straight strip of French coast, which is known as Les Landes (The Deserts). Formerly this vast stretch of country was little more than its name implies—a wild, naked, desert region of sands and marshes, mingled with pine-woods and wide heaths. Along the seashore rose vast sand-dunes, and when the storms blew over the surface of the fierce Bay of Biscay, the sand rose in whirling clouds and drove inland, devouring heath and marsh and pine-wood.

It seemed certain at one time that the sea-sands would cover the vast plain which forms the Landes, but their progress has been checked. There is a tree called the sea-pine, which will thrive in these sandy wastes bordering upon the ocean, and vast plantations of it have been made along the coast. The sea-pine sends its tough, wiry roots through the moving sands and binds them together, and converts the shifting sand-bank into firm earth. In their shelter man can work safely, without fear of seeing all his labours spoiled by a sand-storm, and full advantage has been taken of their protection.

The peasant farmer has attacked marsh and heath, has drained, and cultivated, and enriched the soil, until a naked moor has become a smiling cornfield or a verdant pasture, and a great change has come over much

of the Landes. But still there are to be seen wide sweeps of heath, moor, and marsh, where the old features which made the Landes famous are yet to be observed.

Here roam the flocks of small sheep, watched by shepherds who stalk over the ground on long stilts. These stilts were adopted in order to enable their wearers to move swiftly and easily through soft marsh or loose sand. From childhood the peasants are trained to use these stilts 6 feet high, and they are wonderfully skilful in walking with them. They can travel at a striking speed, almost as fast as a horse can gallop, and to aid them they have a long stick in hand, which serves to steady them at awkward places. When they come to a stand they use the top of the stick as a seat, and perch themselves there at ease, watching their flocks, their hands often busy with knitting-needles, as they knit the thick footless stockings used in that region.

Beside the care of their flocks, they busy themselves with resin, the only harvest of these wilder parts of the Landes. This is gathered from the pines which line the shore and bind the sand. In the trunk of a pine a notch is cut, and a cup is fixed below. Very slowly a resinous gum oozes from the tree and runs into the cup, and from time to time the resin-gatherer comes to empty the cup. This resin is used for making turpentine.

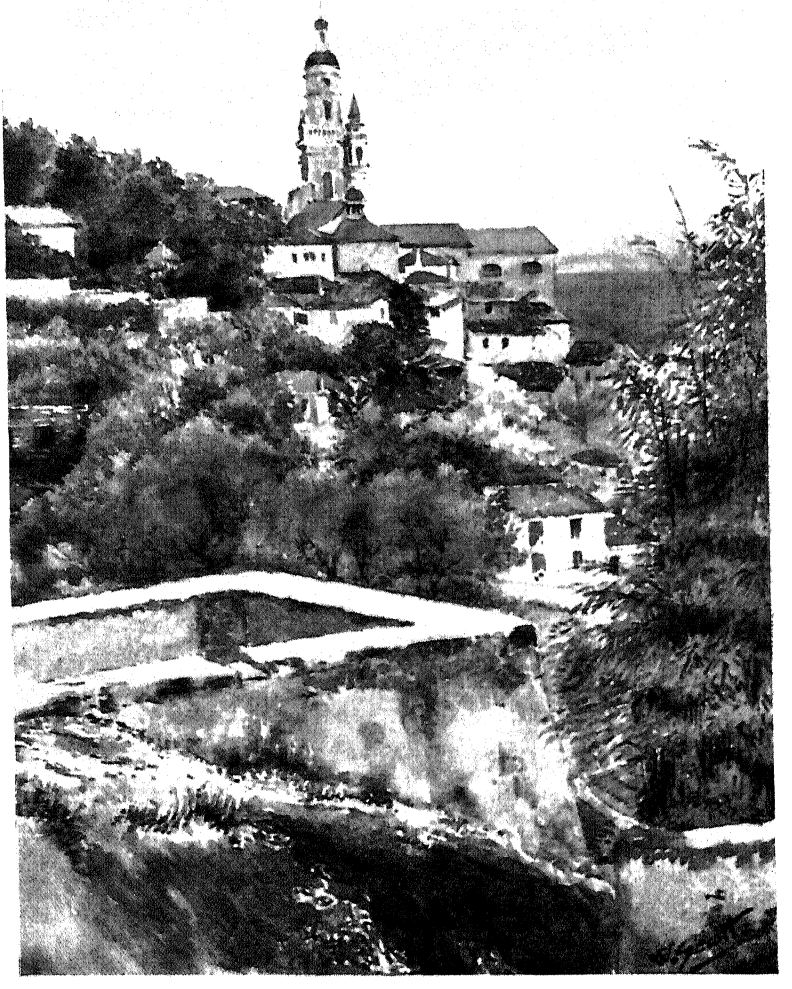
CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE SOUTH

BEYOND the Landes rises the vast mountain-chain of the Pyrenees, the range which separates France from Spain. It is a wonderful and almost a complete barrier between the two countries. The passes are rare, and most of them can only be crossed on foot, so that they are used by none save shepherds and muleteers. Only four are of service as carriage roads, and these cross the range at a great height.

Near the western end of this range lies Biarritz, on the shores of the Bay of Biscay. It is a pretty town, much frequented by visitors, and in its streets we may see the dark, strong, lithe figures of the Basques, a strange people of the Pyrenees. The Basques are neither French nor Spanish, and they resemble no other race in Europe. Little is known either of their origin or language, but the people are a very distinct type. "Stalwart, brown-faced Basques, with their loose, circular caps, their white sandals, their air of walking for a wager. Never was a tougher, a hardier race." They make splendid sailors and fishermen.

The Basques are very fond of story and song, and a great feature at their merry-makings is a competition among the local poets, who have to compose verses upon the spur of the moment on any given topic. They are very superstitious, and believe firmly in the evil-eye and witchcraft, and they have a great store of



MENTONE.

legends and simple old tales. Here is a very popular fireside story :

There were once a man and his wife who were very poor. One day the man was sitting at a cross-road feeling very sad, when a gentleman came by.

"Why are you so sad?" asked the gentleman.

"Because I am so poor," replied the man.

"Well," said the gentleman, "I will give you as much money as you wish if in ten years you can tell me how old is the Evil One."

"All right," said the man, for he thought that in ten years you can find out a great deal.

Well, the man received a large sum of money, and went home very happy. For a long time he and his wife lived in great comfort, and then the man began to be sad again ; the end of the time was coming, and he knew nothing and could learn nothing about the age of the Evil One.

"Why are you so sad?" said his wife to him one day. "We have all we wish for, yet you look unhappy."

Then the man told his wife how he had obtained the money, and he feared that some great evil would fall upon him if the ten years came to an end, and he could not answer the question.

"Pooh!" said she ; "there is nothing to fear. I will tell you how to find out. First roll yourself in a barrel of honey and then roll yourself in a barrel of feathers. Then in that dress you must go to the cross-roads and wait till the Evil One passes. You must run to him on all fours like a dog, and run back-

ward and forward, and go between his legs, and walk all round him, and mind you listen to what he says."

The man did as his wife bade him, and sure enough the Evil One came past the cross-roads. And when the Evil One saw this strange figure capering around him he became frightened, and cried out: "I am ten thousand years old, and I have never seen any such creature as this, and so frightfully ugly."

The man had heard all he wanted. Away he went and told his wife that her advice had saved him, and that he was ready with his answer. But no one ever came to ask him, so then they knew that the gentleman had been the Evil One himself trying to trap him; and they lived rich and happily ever after.

Travelling east from Biarritz towards the town of Toulouse, we come to the pleasant, smiling garden country of Gascony. We are now in the true south, the land of sun and brightness, of a climate so genial that on every hand there are signs that no one fears heavy rains or driving snowstorms; the roofs of the houses are almost flat, the barns are often open and stand upon arches. Where there is water the land smiles with plenty. "The plants have a strange aromatic odour, the fruits are luscious, the enormous grapes are rich in hue and bloom; they are so abundant that the poorest children in the streets eat them by handfuls." Where the land is waterless it stretches bare and sterile, all vegetation burned up by the intense heat, red and brown stones baking in the sun. Houses and towns have a tawny, bronzed look; they,

too, are sunburned by long exposure to the fierce rays.

Toulouse stands upon the Garonne, and is glad when the river does no more than glide by its fine quays and carry away its barges to Bordeaux. For sometimes the Garonne rises in inundation, and then the lower parts of the town are flooded so that people are compelled to fly from their homes to the higher ground. There are some fine churches in Toulouse, and it is a place of considerable trade.

Beyond Toulouse we pass some most interesting old fortress towns as we journey towards the sea. There is Carcassonne, a vast citadel, so defended by huge towers, walls, ramparts, bastions, barbicans, battlements, and every other device known to the Middle Ages, that it remained impregnable for centuries, guarding the great road into Spain. It was a famous fortress in Roman days; it remained famous till modern artillery robbed such places of their strength, and now, in its romantic splendour, it is a great showplace, and a centre of pilgrimage for sight-seers. Nearer the sea lies Narbonne, noted for its Roman remains; but the greatest buildings the Romans left in this land must be sought for farther east at, and near, the town of Nîmes.

In Nîmes there is a magnificent amphitheatre and a most beautiful little Roman temple, quite perfect, and of so simple and graceful a design as to charm all who see it. But the most wonderful work of Roman hands is at a short distance from the town. This is the Pont du Gard, an aqueduct thrown across a valley by

the Romans to bring fresh water to the city. It is a tremendous bridge, rising in three tiers ; the number of arches in each tier is different, and they become smaller and more numerous from tier to tier. At the top is the conduit, which held the stream at a height of 155 feet above the bed of the river below. This vast work is built of huge blocks of stone fitted together without cement or mortar, and so splendidly was it built that to this day all its features remain perfect. The great arches spring into the air, and stand as true as the day their Roman builders set them up. It is a noble piece of masonry, striking in its vastness and solidity, and giving a deep impression of the immense power of those who raised it so many centuries ago.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LAND OF OLIVES

EASTWARD from Nîmes we journey through the land of Provence, the "South of France" above all other parts of the south. It is the land of grey-green olive groves, of dark cypresses, of houses with flat-terraced roofs where vines clamber over trellises, and great fig-leaves creep over the edges of the garden walls ; where little dove-coloured oxen draw creaking waggons over white roads in the hot dusty sunshine.

Through this scene flows the broad, stately current of the Lower Rhone ; but we will leave that great river for the present, and go on to those shores to

which so many visitors hasten in winter and spring to escape the rigour of Northern lands.

The names of the towns along the Provençal coast are familiar to all—Cannes, Nice, Mentone, and the strip of shore called the Riviera is the best-known piece of French coast to the world at large. The Riviera is famous for its gardens, which scent the air with delicious odours; its groves, where tall date-palms tower above orange-trees laden with their shining fruit; and for the glorious views which may be gained, on the one hand, of mountains and, on the other, of the deep blue sea.

The late Grant Allen, speaking of the view from Cap d'Antibes, a small peninsula on the Riviera coast, says: "To look at it from the outside, the Cap d'Antibes is just a long low spit of dull olive-grey land, but within it has sea and mountain views most gloriously beautiful. To the east you see everything you can see from Nice; to the west you see everything you can see from Cannes; to the north a gigantic range of snow-covered Alps; to the south, and all around, the sky-blue Mediterranean. To sit among oranges, olives, and palms, as at Algiers or Palermo, and yet look up from one's seat under one's own vine and fig-tree to see the snow-clad Alps glowing pink in the sunset, as at Zermatt or Chamouni, is a combination of delights nowhere else to be met with in Europe."

We need not give much attention to the fashionable cities of the Riviera. They are very beautiful, with broad streets, fine villas, splendid shops, and, in the season, a crowd of wealthy people from all parts of the

globe. But there is in them not a tithe of the interest to be found in the quaint little villages which have hung for centuries high up among the rocks of the Riviera coast.

At first sight of one of these rock villages of the Riviera one wonders why so inconvenient a place has been chosen. The little hamlet may be perched on the summit of a crag, very difficult to reach by a rocky winding way. But the very difficulty of access was the reason why it was put there. For many centuries the waters of the Mediterranean were swept by the vessels of pirates and freebooters of many nations. Worst and most dreaded of all were the Barbary rovers, the Moors and renegades who sailed from Algiers, Sallee, and Tunis on the African coast to plunder and enslave those who dwelt on the northern shores of the inland sea.

Countless were the raids made by these fierce Moslems. Their markets were packed with Christian slaves; their storehouses were filled to bursting with the wealth of Christendom. Listen to the old chronicler:

"They very deliberately, even at noonday, or, indeed, just when they please, leap ashore, and walk on without the least dread, and advance into the country ten, twelve, or fifteen leagues or more; and the poor Christians, thinking themselves secure, are surprised unawares; many towns, villages, and farms sacked, and infinite numbers of souls—men, women, children, and infants at the breast—dragged away into a wretched captivity. With these miserable, ruined people, loaded with their own valuables, the Corsairs retreat leisurely, with eyes full of laughter and content, to their vessels."

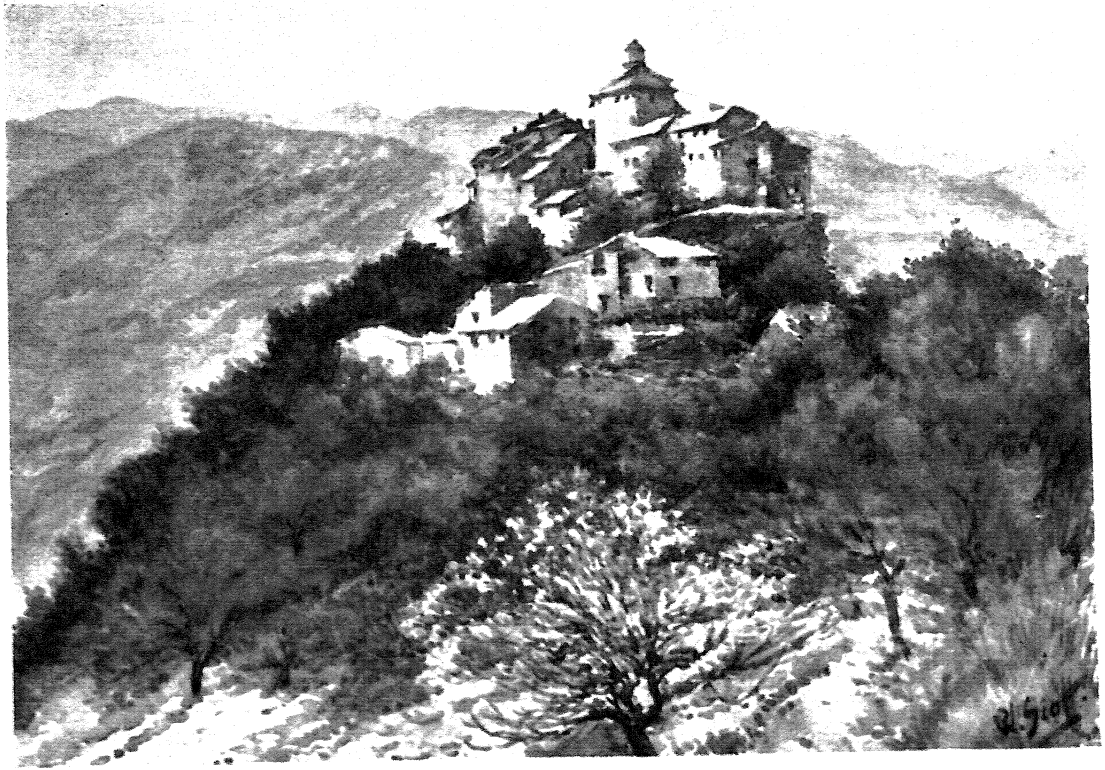
We cannot wonder, then, that the dwellers on this coast built their little towns and villages upon precipitous crags where the steep way up to their stronghold could easily be held by the men of the hamlet against the savage pirate onslaughts. Upon one of these rocky hill-tops a village will be packed into the tiniest compass. House is fitted into house, and every inch of the uneven surface is made use of. In the case of a deep hole in the rock, this is used as a cellar or stable. The house is raised on walls above the hollow, and the people ascend to their own quarters by a flight of steps. In the vault below they keep their mules or store their crops. They have no carts, for the ways are too steep and uneven. All carriage is done by mules, which carry their burdens upon a pack-saddle.

Even where there was room to build freely, the houses were still huddled closely together. It was not a question of trying to save land for purposes of tillage; it was a question of limiting the space to be defended; a small compact place was more easily held against the foe than a large straggling one. Thus the little houses clustered together about the streets more like one big rambling building than like separate homes. When more room was needed, it was looked for within the walls; the very streets were covered in and thrown into the houses, so that the village became one huge dwelling. In many cases the houses were so built that their back walls formed also the walls of the village; the front walls, which alone had windows and doors, faced an inner square or court.

These rock villages are wonderfully striking and picturesque in appearance. They are still inhabited by the descendants of those who built them, and the patient labour of this hard-working peasantry has turned to account almost every foot of the rocky slopes which lie around their homes. Where the hill-side is very steep it is cut into terraces and planted thickly with the vine, with lemon-trees, with vegetables, with flowers which are exported in great quantities, and, above all, with the olive, the chief crop of the country-side.

The olive—the "immortal olive," as it is often called—is a source of great gain to the peasant of the south. It is called "immortal" because it is so long-lived. Trees are shown which are known to be many hundred years old. It is not an expensive tree to cultivate ; the roots are manured from time to time, and that is all. There are two olive harvests: the first in October, the second in April. The October harvest consists in gathering the windfalls, which are used in making an inferior kind of oil. The best oil is made from the April harvest, when the berries are gently shaken from the trees on to linen which is spread upon the ground.

The olives are put into a huge press, beneath which is a great vat to catch the precious oil. Formerly these presses were worked by horses or mules, and they are worked still in this way in remote parts, but many farmers now use water-power. Among the hills every mountain torrent is dotted with wheels to drive the oil-mills, and as the mills have finished their work



before the heats of summer draw on, there is generally plenty of water for their needs.

The oil which pours from the press at the April harvest is of the finest quality—pure oil for table use. From the lees of the crushed berries a further but much inferior supply is produced, and this is used to make soap. As a rule, an olive-tree will yield oil to the value of ten shillings a year, so that the large groves, whose grey-green foliage and twisted trunks form the chief feature of Provençal scenery, are a source of much profit to the Provençal farmer.

CHAPTER XX

SOME TOWNS ON THE RHONE

THE Rhone is the great river of Southern France. It rises in the Alps, pours its swift, dark blue, rushing stream past Geneva, and soon enters France to course down the Savoy slopes to Lyons, where it meets its great tributary, the Saône, flowing down from Burgundy and the distant Vosges Mountains in the north.

At Lyons the spot where the two rivers meet is a well-known sight. The blue Rhone and the muddy Saône at first refuse to mingle. They rush on side by side, a blue band along one bank, a grey band along the other ; but little by little they fuse into each other, and the sparkling Rhone becomes tinged with grey.

Lyons is a handsome city, although it is the centre of great manufactures. Here are the headquarters of

the silk industry in France, and the products of the looms of Lyons are well known all over the world.

As we go down the Rhone valley we see vast groves of mulberry-trees on the slopes, the leaves of which are used to feed the silkworms. We pass Vienne, noted for its Roman remains, and as we hurry south by the rail which clings closely to the course of the river, we come into sight of the most beautiful part of the Lower Rhone, that portion where its basin is bounded by the Alps of Dauphiné. These glorious heights pile their icy summits against the sky in an endless variety of outline, and after passing Montélimar we see Mont Ventoux, whose gleaming white crest tops the grand mass of this chief height of the range.

The nearer view is that of a pleasant fertile country, whose hills are latticed over with vines, and at one spot we pass a low range of bare, unlovely slopes, where every foot of land is of priceless value. For here is grown the grape which yields the famous Hermitage, one of the most costly of wines. Nowhere else can this vine be reared. If shoots be taken to other places they at once degenerate. Here, in some point of soil or position, or both combined, is the only spot where this rich grape will come to perfection.

At the town of Orange we pause, and remember that William III. was also Prince of Orange, and wonder if this place has anything to do with the Netherlands. Yes, it was from this little town he took the name. It was once an independent principality, and its rulers were the Princes of Orange. It fell by marriage to the House of Nassau, whence sprang our

Dutch King. But Orange has long been in the hands of France. It was exchanged for other possessions.

The chief feature of the quiet little town is the remains of a great Roman theatre. The seats of the spectators were built round the curve of a hill-side, and facing them is a colossal wall, closing in the stage. This wall is the wonder of the place. It is 111 feet high, 334½ feet long, and 13 feet thick. It is "composed of massive blocks of dark brown stone simply laid one on the other, the whole naked, rugged surface of which suggests a natural cliff rather than an effort of human, or even Roman, labour. It is the biggest thing at Orange. It is bigger than all Orange put together, and its permanent massiveness makes light of the shrunken city."

From Orange it is no long journey to Avignon, where stands the great palace of the Popes. In 1305 a French Bishop was chosen Pope, and he set up his Court at Avignon instead of Rome. Here it was held till 1370, when a Pope of Rome was once again established in the ancient city. Now came a great split in the Papal Church. A French Pope, or Anti-pope, as he was called, was installed at Avignon, and this division lasted for between forty and fifty years, till the French submitted, and the whole Church came again under the sway of Rome.

The vast palace-fortress of the Popes still lifts its huge square grey towers above the city. It stands in a commanding position, perched high on a rocky headland, round which the Rhone sweeps its waters in a broad, imposing stream. From Avignon every

traveller makes the excursion to the celebrated valley of Vaucluse, where the poet Petrarch had a cottage near the splendid fountain which here bursts from the hills and forms the River Sorgues. Vaucluse is a hidden and sequestered glen deep among the mountains, overhung by lofty precipices of grey rock. The spot where Petrarch's cottage stood is pointed out. That is long since gone, but at the end of the glen the fountain still rises. "You find yourself at the foot of the enormous straight cliff out of which the river gushes. It rears itself to an extraordinary height—a huge forehead of bare stone—looking as if it were the half of a tremendous mound split open by volcanic action. The little valley, seeing it there, at a bend, stops suddenly, and receives in its arms the magical spring. From under the mountain it silently rises, without visible movement, filling a small natural basin with the stillest blue water."

We return to Avignon, and continue to descend the Rhone until we reach the quiet little city of Arles, standing where the Rhone begins to break into many arms, and forms a great strange delta, which in itself is a sight, "that 'Africa-in-Europe,' as it has been called, a vast, salt plain, haunted by ibis, flamingo, and pelican, with the mirage of the desert constantly to be seen along its glittering levels."

Arles is another city famous for its Roman remains, the chief of which is a splendid arena, most massively built, and capable of holding 20,000 spectators, for in Roman days Arles was a great and flourishing city. Then there are the remains of a Roman theatre, and a

museum rich in sculpture. Of later date is the cathedral, one of the oldest churches in France, a building with a wonderful porch. This porch is covered with carvings, not only very old, but very perfect. The figures are remarkable for their vigour, and, despite the fact that they have stood there since the twelfth century, not a nose or a finger is missing. "It is a dense embroidery of sculpture, black with time, but as uninjured as if it had been kept under glass." A little out of the town stands the Aliscamps, the ancient Elysian fields, an old pagan place of sepulture, to which the dead were brought from distant cities. In later times it became in part a Christian cemetery, but has now long been disused.

From Arles we go on to Marseilles through the brown, sunburned land, passing low ranges of hills where the shepherd of Provence whistles to his flock, or walks slowly at their head and calls upon his sheep to follow. This they do, marching at his heels in a long winding train as he threads the little twisting paths on the sunny slopes. Before reaching Marseilles we cross a great strange plain, the Crau. Formerly this was a wide desert covered entirely with pebbles and rocks, a naked, sterile plain. But now canals bring the water of the Rhone and a tributary, the Durance, to it, and the Crau is coming under cultivation. Water is all it needs, for where water has been run over its surface splendid crops have been gathered.

After passing the Crau we soon reach Marseilles, a beautiful city finely placed on the blue Mediterranean. This magnificent port does things magnificently. It

wanted water. It brought a canal as large as a river from the Durance, carried it over a vast aqueduct, and poured its waters into the city, so that streams of running water coursed along the sides of the streets and made the country round green beneath a burning sun.

Its quays are of immense size, bordered by a forest of masts. Taine, a celebrated French writer, says: "It is the most flourishing and magnificent of the Latin towns. Since the splendid days of Alexandria, Rome, and Carthage, nothing to equal it has been seen on the shore of the Mediterranean. It is a true southern maritime city, such as the ancient colonies founded. It is a harbour enclosed by naked rocks, without water or trees, its only beauty the sparkling blue of the sea and the hard lines of the mountains bathed in light. Within, it is an ant-heap, full of life and amusement; superb and splendid mansions, splendid cafés adorned with plate-glass and pictures; luxurious carriages drawn by fine, high-mettled horses. At night a score of broad boulevards, lined with plane-trees and embellished with fountains and brilliantly lighted, are filled by a densely packed crowd, talking and gesticulating among the casinos, cafés chantants, and open theatres."

Such is the great city of Southern France, whose port is the door through which the riches of the East flow into the country, and whence a flood of French products pours out to other lands.

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