

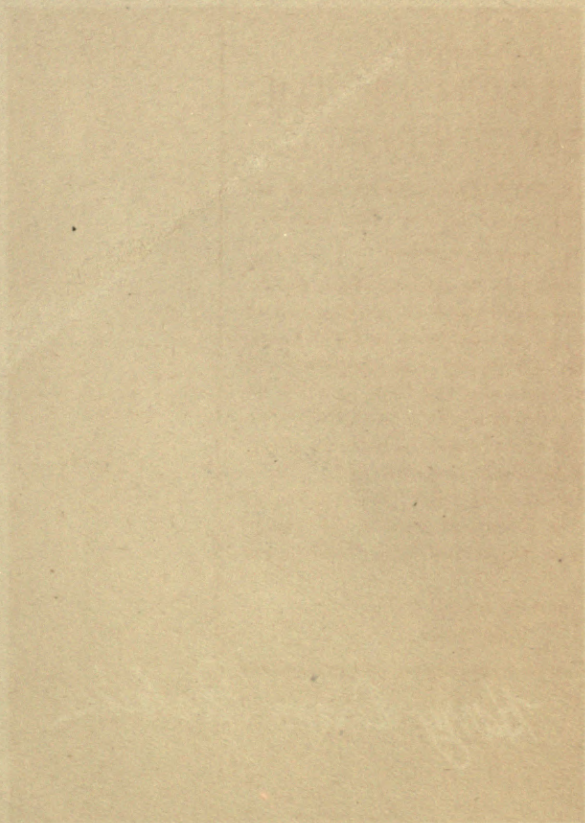
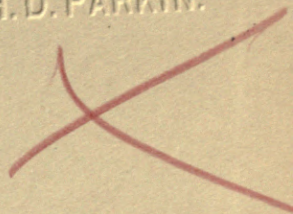
FALAISE  
THE TOWN OF THE CONQUEROR



BY  
ANNA BOWMAN DODD



H. D. PARKIN.



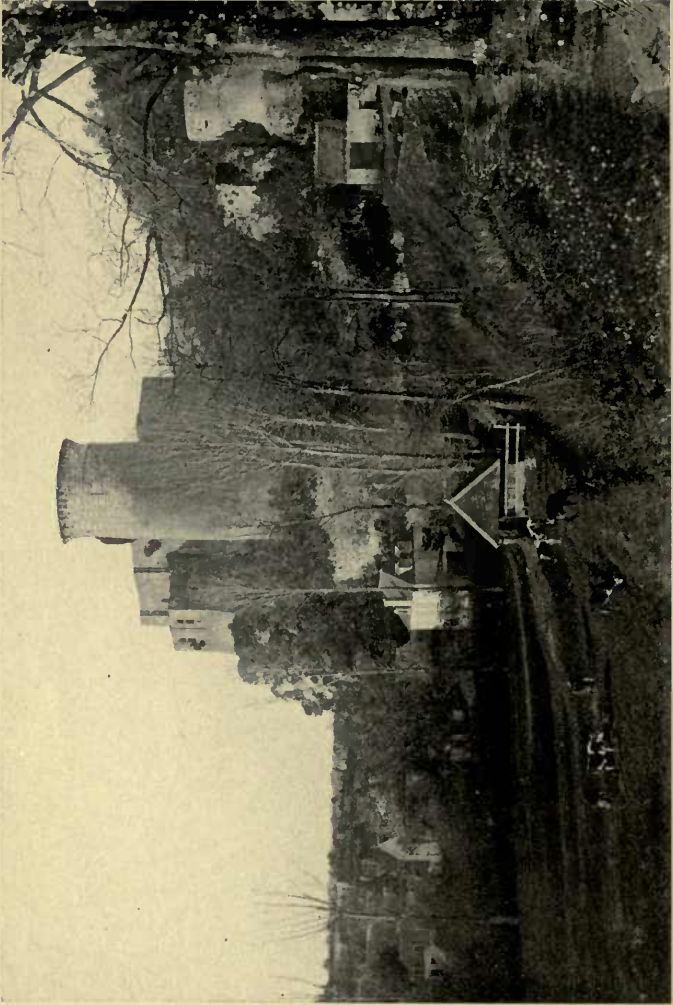
H. D. PARKIN.

FALAISE

The Town of the Conqueror







*The Chateau of Falaise.*



FALAISE<sup>H. D. PARKIN.</sup>

# The Town of the Conqueror

By

Anna Bowman Dodd

Author of

“In and Out of Three Normandy Inns,” “Cathedral Days,”  
“On the Broads,” “Glorinda,” etc.

*Illustrated*



Boston  
Little, Brown, and Company  
1910

H. D. PARKIN.

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Printers

S. J. PARKHILL & Co., BOSTON, U. S. A.

DÉDICATION  
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MONSIEUR LE CURÉ BERNARD  
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## PREFACE

**A**S certain of the smaller Italian towns played each their part in that European phase of development we call the Renaissance, so in France some of its minor towns have been centres of great movements whose influence has not been alone for France and Frenchmen, but for the whole human race.

For several centuries, in Falaise, feudalism and chivalry, English and French arms, Catholicism and Protestantism each in turn struggled for that supremacy which was to make or mar human progress.

From the days when Romans made of Normandy a delightful Roman province to the reign of the Great Napoleon, there has been no century in which Falaise has not contributed a brilliant or important chapter to French history.

Lying somewhat apart from the high-roads of tourist travel, this interesting and beautiful town is but little known.

Fully to write its history would be to write the histories of Normandy and of France. The present volume is an attempt merely to outline the town's earlier military importance, to trace its growth in commercial prosperity, and to describe the charm of its modern aspect.

The treatment of "The Story of Arlette," in fictional form, in Part II., was suggested by the models furnished us in the older chroniclers, whose versions of the loves of Robert and Arlette agree chiefly in their preference for a fanciful rather than for the more conventional historical form.

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PART I  
TO THE FAIR AT FALAISE



# FALAISE:

## THE TOWN OF THE CONQUEROR

### CHAPTER I

#### AN INN COURTYARD

**T**HE summer city of the blond beaches — the city that stretches from beneath the cliffs of Etretat to the rock-perched cathedral of Mont St. Michel — was at its gayest revel of crowded promenades, casino balls, and villa and châteaux festivities.

Nowhere along the bright coast was the scene of this yearly review of the fashions and of the invertebrate passions bred of them, set with greater effect than in the ornamental courtyard of the famous old inn, Guillaume le Conquérant. Centuries ago, kings and great ladies had passed beneath its arched doorway. Once more the life and fashion of its era was centred within the open courtyard. Like cer-

tain marvellous faces seated about the tables, the old inn with its new hangings, bright tiles, and modern bric-à-brac adornments, presented the aspect of a correctly restored, touched-up antiquity. Those who, only yesterday, had been dining under the trees of the Champs Élysées, and who now found themselves breakfasting under Normandy roofs, to such there could have been no startling sense of change.

Each little table was a centre of talk and laughter. Above the metallic clatter of well-plied forks and knives rose the gay rhythm of the purling French speech. Under the shade of the large umbrellas, the Faubourg St. Germain sat covertly watching the Chaussée d'Antin. The smart world of the Jockey Club, between courses, was busy booking its bets; for, in an hour, the horses were to run at Caen.

In open sheds and inner courtyards, coaches, automobiles, motor-cycles, bicycles, every vehicle warranted best to minister to the modern mania for rapid displacement — with these was every inch of available space crowded. Above

the melodious murmur of voices, the grinding of wheels struck upon the ear—in harsh discord. The throb of panting engines, the shriek of released steam—such were the sounds that were turning the quiet of a Normandy inn into the clangour of a metropolitan centre.

Kaleidoscopic as changes wrought at a masque were some of the surprises served to the eye.

The American beauty of the Houlgate season, unrecognizable a moment before, when seated in her red-painted car, was now proven to be a beauty and no monster. Her unsightly envelope of rubber coat, goggles, and thick veil once shed, the flower of her loveliness emerged fresh as the growing roses about her.

A certain prince, however, lying flat on his back, in the inner courtyard, beneath the broken vertebræ of his car, was the true focal attraction. He was the hero of the hour. Begrimed, oily, besmirched, this scion of one of the oldest of great French houses, was acclaimed as ideal a figure as were certain of his ancestors.

The youthful prostrate form was being all but mobbed. Any number of great ladies, and others less great, left their omelettes to cool, that they might circle about the hero prince.

"He's a dead game sport!" a lovely Anonyma cried out, as she bent her vast tulle turban above the dislocations of the wrenched wheel.

"*Très crane, ça* — I really didn't think it of him!" sotto-vocé'd a lady of the right aristocratic faubourg, as she imperilled the purity of her laces to get a better look at her young friend.

The blows dealt by this young nobleman's hammer were making an *al fresco* breakfast in this picturesque old inn as peaceful and agreeable a meal as if eaten in a foundry. But what of that? Or what of the poisoning of an air, usually as sweet as roses and ozone produce, with smells such as formerly overhung a mediæval town? Both noise and smells but proved the inn to be in the very highest fashion of our day.

In the midst of a world so gay and up-to-date, the rickety old omnibus, as it creaked its way between the frou-frou of the ladies'



skirts, seemed an anachronism. A peasant and an abbé, who had sought a vine-covered shed as if it were a cloistered retreat from which to view the dazzle and glitter of the brilliant scene, were two more.

A third was a Normandy char-à-bancs, into which maidservants and hostlers were placing portmanteaux and other travelling impedimenta. In so venerable an inn as one dating from the Conqueror, for its world to sneer at a Norman cart would seem incredible. But its novel use had brought about the usual sharpness of criticism. To drive, indeed, when all the world was automobiling or cycling—even though the gain in speed should send one the quicker into the world beyond! Above all—to choose a peasant's cart!—to say nothing of going inland when all Paris was lining the bright Calvados beaches! No, only the countries beyond the sea bred such choice varieties as that.

This verdict was conveyed to us by any number of eyes. The French eye differs from its better-disciplined sister below it—the suave Gallic mouth—in this: it will tell you the

truth with an almost refreshing Anglo-Saxon sincerity. Who sees the monster, when the ear is being seduced by the caressing French syllables? Those hundreds of eyes were speaking plain truths and, though lips were working, since no words reached the ear, we were left in no doubt whatever as to the true import of the message.

For my own part, I should like to have made a rejoinder. Any number of fine things have occurred to me since, as the right answer to have given, there and then, from the broad seat of that *char-à-bancs*.

First of all, every Frenchman in that gay courtyard would have been the better for knowing that Americans, when they travel, are the wisest of fools—they commit the prudent folly of first enrolling themselves under the banner of sentiment. Now in matters pertaining to sentiment we Americans are as inexorable as we are inconsistent. We must have the old and the historic served up to us with the sauce of reality. Restorations we resent as a personal injury. Innovations are criminal. Yet such is our inconsistency, we

are not over-keen about breathing the same air as that with which antiquity went into business, so to speak. We prefer the picturesque, when hygienically plumbed. Let it, however, beware of becoming the fashion. We and the ghosts, the latter properly disinfected, must have the place to ourselves.

Hence the logic of starting for an eleventh-century Fair in a Normandy char-à-bancs.

Here was an expedition with the right historic flavor. The cross-country drive would be the test as to whether all Normandy had gone the way of this old inn; whether, also, by the roads we were to go, in those rolling fifty miles, the smile of adventure might not be caught dimpling the cheek of the commonplace; and whether, at our journey's end, we might not touch hands with customs as old as the feudal centuries. Falaise, the town of William, and his cradle, we were told, was a town in a thousand.

Across the melting greens of the vast Caen plains, from the heights above Dives, the town on its bright inland cliffs had, indeed, been beckoning us with alluring insistence.

Churches, squares, and antique-faced streets were, it was said, clustered close as when they felt the protective clasp of stout brown walls; the great fortress, the famous Norman stronghold, with brave semblance of its former might, was still to be seen fronting the misty vale below; from its base of rock to tree-domed height, the perfect Talbot Tower upsprang with unimpaired grace; and the tiny Ante, dyed now as in the long-ago centuries in its tanner's hues, trickled still between the low banks where Arlette's feet showed white against the red.

In early August, horses also, by the thousands, with their farmer-breeders, gathered still to join in the motley of one of the most picturesque processions that ever tramped a French high-road.

With such a journey in prospect, who, indeed, would not be going to the Fair at Falaise in a Normandy char-à-bancs?

Had this project been but rightly presented to that company of breakfasters, what a send-off would those critical Parisians have given to cart and occupants! William the Conqueror

would surely have been right royally toasted—a figure as delectable, for a second of retrospect, as were the sauces in which this, his inn, have chiefly embalmed his memory. Arlette would also have had a golden moment of success; it was so long since any one had thought of her, she would have presented herself as an absolute novelty. As for the horses, ah, well! horses in groups of thousands, they also would be fine to see. Who knows, one may go back to them some day! *Sapristi!* but what if these Americans were right, after all, in choosing to take a drive through the quiet Normandy lanes, in pursuit of the mediæval and the picturesque, in lieu of speeding to the races through clouds of dust and banks of noxious gases?

With this doubt flecking their pleasure, every one of those Frenchmen, to a man, would have risen and cheered us onward, to the echo. They most certainly would, that is, had the above programme been but submitted to them.

As it fell out, among those hundreds of breakfasters, we found but a single Norman

to approve of either our project or our choice of equipage.

“ *Ce que vous faites là* — what you are about to do — is most wise. The Fair is perishing day by day. In a few years there will be nothing to see. *Et d'ici-là* — and as for the drive — it is a country in a thousand! The little cart will roll you along as if it were on wings. It is light as air. The horse — he also will carry you well, for he knows the road.”

When one's own world turns critic, the praises of even a hostler sound sweet in the ear. But Henri's eulogiums, we swiftly reflected, must not too greatly elate us, for, as it happened, he was the owner of both the horse and the char-à-bancs.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ROMANCE OF THE ROAD

ONCE out upon the road, even the smoke from the ever-encroaching factories near by could not dull the gold of the Normandy noon. It was the sort of day when the sun rays seem to have a personal message for every human creature. The air was instinct with a life-giving freshness. One had the sense of moving forward through buoyant waves of air.

Some comforting rural relics of older, unspoiled Normandy were lining the banks of the Dives canal. On their knees, beside the flowing water, there was the usual miscellaneous assortment of the village vigilants. The chorus of the laughing, chattering Dives laundresses was ever the same. No younger, no older, for a good seven years, at least, they had seemed as fixed in shape and outline as

those other choruses regularly set before us on operatic boards.

On the opposite bank, there was another figure, equally familiar — that of "*le p'tit soldat*" a-fishing.

I never remember to have crossed this part of the Cabourg and Caen road without seeing this little soldier standing there, rod in hand. Whether or not it is always the same man who is buttoned up in the same ill-fitting uniform, I cannot say. The man may have been changed many times, have gone off on wars, or long furloughs, or died, or been married. What happened to the man I know not. From a non-military point of view, it was, however, the same little soldier one saw on the green, flowery banks. Of the same shape and size, small, not too well-modelled, broad of shoulder and wide of leg, his passion for his chosen sport, obviously, was not of the biting sort. He held his rod ever with the same listless air, as if to say, "*Bien!* since one is not drilling, or getting drunk, or killing, or making love — *ma foi* — one might as well fish." His eye, whatever its color, I noticed, was



ever on the bridge and the road, and never, by any chance, upon the limp rod. Never once, in all the summers I have watched it, did I see that curving rod seized with the right convulsive twitching—a motion so thrilling to the true fisherman.

The little soldier, in his bright red trousers, blue coat, belted in brass, appears to be unique;—a French exhibit,—quite by himself.

Perhaps he came in with the Conqueror. The river Dives, if not the canal, was populous with soldiers and boat-builders on a certain memorable historic occasion. Fishing must have been in the highest fashion during the weary days when William was waiting for the right winds to blow and they would not.

As if content with its high place in history, the river Dives has never done an honest stroke of work since the Conquest. It appears to be as useless a stream as any in France.

The straight, gay road to Varaville was a livelier companion. Once our faces turned towards the great Caen plain, and we had

the right sort of roadside company. High covered carts, farmers, a herd of sheep with some lambs, teaching themselves, awkwardly, how to skip; a donkey with empty milk jugs rattling like musketry shot along its patient trit-trotting sides; and a swallow or two, garlanding the air with song — here were the very creatures we had hoped to secure as our fellow-wayfarers.

A poet might have been forgiven had he written an ode to the day and the scene. As all the best odes to the sea, if I remember rightly, have been written by poets who felt it safest to remain on shore, for purely personal reasons, our poet would probably have had a preference for motor-cycles as against any vehicle so old-fashioned as a Normandy cart.

Once more our choice of vehicle was being commented upon. These critics, however, who passed us by, with amazement writ large in their eyes, were at least as competent as they were honest.

Some of the peasants we met stopped still, it is true, as the thrill of their wonder shot through them. Pigs, yes; young calves;

ducks and geese with their legs tied; rabbits, hares and every variety of hen and cock — as well as household goods, if need were, — all these and how many other things or creatures, has not a Normandy char-à-bancs driven to market? But a lady in white duck, with a hat never fashioned by Norman fingers, and a gentleman who drove his steed without using a single Norman oath, or even a “*Oui-da!*” this indeed was a strange adventure for a char-à-bancs!

“*Ah, Dame!* but it’s funny! *c’est drôle!* Yet it seems to go well — the horse is a good one!” That was the first and last of all the peasant verdicts. Our earliest critic stood stock-still on the flat cross-road we had taken to Varaville. He confided his opinion to his young son, who was leading a cow. The cow and her driver were having it out as to which should occupy the whole of the road. While the issue was being decided, and whips were cracking, the farmer saw the chance of assuaging the thirst of his curiosity.

“Monsieur and Madame go perhaps to Caen?”

The man's wrinkled old face, with its eager agate eyes and ridged lips, was close to our wheel; for the cow had waltzed off with our whip-lash, and her owner was skilfully repairing the damage.

"No, — to Falaise!"

"'Cré nom de D — ! to Falaise, — it's a day's journey. *Saprelotte — c'est loin du pays!*"

"*C'est loin du pays!*"

The words rang in the ear — as we rolled swiftly along under the fluttering elms. What fascination of old-time customs, of homely traditions to which France is still hidebound, lies in the phrase, for French rustic ears! France, that charmer, has woven a web for her country-folk stronger than all promise of earthly good elsewhere. The bit of country wherein one is born and reared; the twenty-mile circuit that, to the narrow peasant-vision is the true, the only *pays!* the soil where one has danced, and toiled, and where first love has come to make the senses sing — generations of men and women have transmitted the tender tradition that to live thus within shadow of the home-door is the best of all

portions for a peasant. To go away — *loin du pays* — spells expatriation as strongly to the Frenchman to-day as it did a hundred years ago. For a girl, even in our quick transit days — to marry out of her district, is to invite matrimonial shipwreck. *Le pays* will not be near to watch, to warn, and to counsel. For a man — even an author — to leave his immediate neighborhood is for him to link arms with reprehensible adventure. The Midi, for example, think you it was Tartarin alone the sons of Provence had to forgive their Daudet? It was his turning his back on Nîmes, and his writing in the foreign French tongue! Mistral under his olive boughs at Maillarme — writing his poems in Provençale, here is the true, the ideal figure of a great man in his right *milieu*. There — where he was born — a Frenchman, be he peasant or genius, it is on his birth soil he ought to live and die. When France herself, as a nation, attempts to colonize, does she not put to the test, and before the eyes of the world, the limits of her capacity? When *loin du pays* she is ill at ease, feels herself to be on foreign soil, whim-

pers with the sob of homesickness, and is never at home in her new-made house, however fair it may be.

At our first wayside inn, where we stopped to ask our road to Troarn, the Normandy bar-maid, being of a younger generation than the farmer, and gifted with the fine art of divination, knew better than to ask a question. She was only an inn bar-maid. The fashion plates, however, having taught her how to wear a shirt-waist and how to cut a checkered skirt, the pink of her bodice set off eyes and a dark crown of hair that might have transformed even a realist into a poet.

We were to turn to the left, and then straight on until we reached Bures, the cherry lips said. Then they parted in a comprehending smile. What the eye said, above the smile, with perfect distinctness was — "*Cette dame et ce monsieur* are doing this for a joke, — or a bet. They are strangers. They have never seen a cart like this before. They will drive till they are tired. We shall see them back in an hour." The dark eyes were full of prophecy and the little bow of a well-bred deference.

The next peasant we met was of the newer order. He belonged to the Society of Socialists. He accepted the *char-à-bancs* in good faith; he believed in it as a pledge of our principles; it was a sign of better days to come. He was in the act of drinking and he offered us a share of his cider. It cut us to the heart not to toast his liberality. But the night waited for no man; and we had still a good forty odd miles before us — we explained.

“It was all the same to him,” he would have us to understand, and he drained his glass.

Thus it fell out that we felt ourselves to be at home on the high-road.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CAEN PLAINS

**H**EDGES, thick and dense ; thatched huts ; farmyards whose open courtyards contributed lively notes of color to the tree-tented plains ; thousands of moving cattle and romping horses to carry the eye from the breadth of meadows to low heights swimming in the gold of the noon glow—such were the pictures that were set along our roadway.

In these cool moist plains, noise that, along the coast had plagued the air as with the clangour of a mighty bell, was softened to a pastoral peace. The company of cows munched and moved among the grasses. From any one of the fields one could hear the crow of the



chanticleer, a note as soothing and significant to nature-loving Theocritus as to our own trolley-car and electric-bell-outraged nervous systems.

Few landscapes in the world can equal the flat pasture lands of Upper Calvados. The proximity of the sea peoples the sky with floating cloud-masses, the humidity of its air giving to all vegetation a depth of green peculiar to moist climates.

Little by little, the subtle and satisfying charm of this Normandy landscape was producing an effect not wholly new — to me, at least. So penetrating have I felt this charm to be, that in just such Normandy scenes, and on just such warm, balmy days, I have had that rarest of human sensations, — a satisfied, completed sense of perfect enjoyment. The man or woman who loves nature, sanely, can be made more entirely content, I believe, in the rich inland parts of this marvellous Normandy province than in any other country.

Light, space, breadth, we seemed indeed moving through a new world, one fashioned

by God Himself. Man and his many inventions were as far removed from the spacious, airy chamber roofed with blue, as were certain warlike, semi-savage shapes that, a shadowy company, had been haunting the green world walling our cart-wheels.

The shapes had massed themselves along the ridges of the heights at our left. These phantom forms were the ghosts of that forgotten army that, centuries ago, looked down, along with their king, on their soldier-comrades' fate on these plains, when William — not yet Conqueror — still smarting under the sting of Bastard, had ridden down from Falaise to show his king how a soldier and a general who knew his trade could wait for the right moment, knew just where to strike to hit and hurt the hardest.

The ford at Varaville, that we had passed but a half mile back, was the point where this wily Norman had chosen to trap his king. King Henry, as it happened, had no business, he and his hundred thousand, at Varaville. This invasion of Normandy being the second attack on William's duchy by Henry, who, as

it chanced, could never think on Normandy without breaking the tenth commandment—William had determined it should also be the last. Henry and his great army were allowed to ravage the land: to sack what, in that nascent eleventh century, there was of Caen to sack:—and then, as the Frenchmen were on their way homewards, to carry spoils and the brimming sense of easy conquest back to Paris with them, it was precisely at that moment of gloating that William the avenger struck, and struck unto death.

The lovely Caen plain was not as fertile and jocund a land, in those earlier centuries, as it is now. At a time when all France was half forest, these great plains presented the usual barriers to a mediæval army's march. Marshes, morass, thickets, a jungle of tangled vines and wild underbrush, William knew his own land well. It was such a wilderness as this into which the young and wily duke had let his over-lord's army wander, unhindered.

He and his own twenty thousand fell upon the Frenchmen at their most helpless moment. Half the French army had crossed the Vara-

ville ford. The king and his bodyguard already had gained the Dives heights: up the green slopes horses and men were gayly mounting — the song of a bloodless triumph on their lip.

What were the cries, the shrieks for help that came from the plain? King and men with one accord turned, only to swell in their turn the chorus of pain and death with their own groans and howls of rage.

Where had the Bastard hidden himself — he and what seemed that mighty host of men who were falling upon the Frenchmen with the power of ruthless giants? Helpless indeed was that hapless army. Henry must stand there, in his impotent fury, and watch from the low hills that seemed to have piled themselves up to their present altitude for the sole purpose of affording the king a better view of the destruction going on below, the great companies of maddened Frenchmen who were plunging themselves waist-deep into the murky waters of the ford. Behold! — about, behind, before them, were those terrible Normans, nimble as cats in their short tunics, quick with

the lance and bow as a cloud to drop rain, picking off the swimming, struggling Frenchmen as easily as if they were but berries, thrusting them back into the water with their lances, and thus killing them — till the Varaville ford ran blood so thick it crimsoned the sea.

Across the hills Henry and his army had no choice but to flee, for William and his bowmen were waiting below to complete their work.

It has taken all the intervening centuries to complete that work. Norman, Englishman, Catholic, Protestant, noble, peasant, each in turn has drenched these plains in blood. Once more the Norman now owns his Norman land. And in place of that shadowy company — of that phantom host of warriors, killing and killed — behold the silent company of moving cattle, carrying, from glistening grass-lands to violet-hued tree trunks, their brilliantly lit hides.

The Caen plains, in lieu of their fame as a battlefield, have been renowned for the breeds of horses and cattle raised upon them.

Many of the very horses we were to see at the Fair on the morrow had been raised on these meadows. The rich grasses, the succulent weeds, and the many brooks with which the plains are watered have given a Continental reputation to these pasture lands.

By the exuberance of their spirits, their joyous plunges and sonorous snortings, the colts and horses especially manifested their approval of this open-air cure and system of development.

Such lively companions had the effect of inducing our own little Normandy stallion to show off his paces. The cart, as its owner had prophesied, was now rolling along "as light as air." The roads were as flat as a table. This new inland warmth and dryness in the air made the whip a useless menace. In and out of sunny villages we were swept with a dash that nearly finished us — before, so to speak, we were fairly begun.

Two mettlesome Percherons, vigorously pulling a huge cart filled with cider barrels, had the stubbornness to hold the whole of the road against their driver's whip-lashing objections.

*Normand contre Normand*—the encounter was bound to be characteristic. Our own sturdy steed, like his namesake — Henri IV — wisely played the game of concession. He appeared to yield the point of the heavier team keeping to the safer middle of a none-too-wide roadway. But once he had conceded the point, and his revenge was planned. The Percherons were swinging along in single file, with kingly step. Our game little stallion suddenly turned from his treading the ditch-path. He gave a shriek as of a horse-devil let loose, and the first kingly Percheron had the surprise of his life. Into his ribs Henri IV planted a well-aimed head-blow. The surprise had the desired effect. The cider cart was promptly swerved to the left. The right of way once won, our valiant little warrior sped merrily onwards, as if hitting horses twice his size was a game exactly to his taste.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHÂTEAUX AND CHURCH SPIRES

**H**AY-CARTS and char-à-bancs rattling merrily along the densely-shaded roads; wandering sheep, with shepherds in their classic cloaks on low hillsides, with eyes upon their flocks; dogs of that vagrant variety who always appear to have business to transact in a neighboring village;—these wayfarers and a company of bicyclists who, like ourselves, were bound for the Fair—such were the successors to the Norman dukes now to be met along the road.

Two of that company of bicyclists were of the neighborly, talkative sort. Their own wheeling they found less original than ours.

“*Tiens!*” — (being Beaux Arts students from Illinois they were quite reckless of their noticeably recent acquirements of the French language) “*mais, — c’est d’un chic — ça! —* how



had we ever thought of it — and why hadn't it been thought of before? Rattling! perfectly rattling fun, to be going about in a char-à-bancs and with a Normandy stallion! By Jove! how he went, though! how they all went — these Normandy horses! At the Fair — there were to be thousands," they had heard, "and was n't the country ripping! Simply reeking with good things, was n't it?"

They had been days on the road, they said, sketching and photographing. And then — with a common impulse, they turned their cameras on us, — quite as though they were doing us a favor. Before they remounted — they assured us "they had us — down fine!" and away they flew, nodding and smiling, aglow with the satisfaction of having done a good deed.

At least one of the statements made by these future American architects was altogether right. Scarcely a village but gave eloquent proof of having felt the tremendous impetus of the great Norman and early Gothic movements. At Troarn, at Argences, at Moulton — church towers and noble Norman or Pointed Gothic

porches proved the generous rivalry that had fired the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth century chisels with the passion of producing architectural masterpieces.

The transitions to be traced from Roman basilica models to the flowering of the Gothic — the earlier thirteenth-century work — you could spell out that wondrous writing in carvings, where still lingered pale touches of color; or in rich and shadowy doorways; or in arches soaring skyward. Scarcely a hamlet but boasted of architectural triumphs in churches, any one of which would have made the reputation of a modern architect so perilously great as to have insured him the charge of gross imitation.

One of the secrets of the perdurable fascination of France, lies in its presentment of a collection of as rich contrasts, within a limited area, as any land the sun shines upon. In this remote inland country, its engaging assortment of church spires was not the sole surprise. Stately châteaux uprose along our roadway, some wall-inclosed, others as defenceless as were the grass-roofed huts.

One of these, close to Valmèray, was of the Grand Roi period. Its severe, but imposing façade, like the courtiers surrounding that august monarch, had copied the style of that ceremonious epoch. Set thus in its rural frame, within the narrow margin of formal gardens, the meadows and high-roofed hay-ricks near by made the aspect of the great house doubly formidable.

Just beyond the château a noble avenue of elms clasped their upper boughs to let the company of road-farers pass on.

At St. Sylvain even our sturdy little stallion knew better than to rush through such a town at a gallop. A church set upon an eminence, in the midst of streets as alive as if born of American enterprise and built in a night, and yet of unmistakable antiquity, this was no town to sweep with an eye-glance. The church, with its noble square tower, and each one of the tortuous, gray-faced streets seemed to be inviting inspection. In any one of the old houses, with their gabled ends, timbered fronts and vine and flower window-decorations, one might have settled down, on nothing a year,

and lived a life of peace—and also of that monotony which passeth all metropolitan understanding.

Cæsar was one of those who had no appetite for the wonted. His travels—feliculously termed conquests—relieved an existence that might otherwise have turned into a form of Roman *ennui*.

His critical, fastidious soldier's eye is said to have looked through the curtains of his litter, upon this part of Normandy when it was called *Lexovii*. The traces of a Roman road, starting from St. Sylvain, are still easily discernible.

Old armor, arrow-heads, tent pegs, coins,—the Norman soil hereabouts has yielded, and yields yet, a large supply of such relics to fatten the Caen, Bayeux and Rouen museums. During the five hundred years of that now misty Roman occupation, these plains and low hills were thick with villas and gardens. Along the road yonder—no further away than Bignette—but a few short miles beyond St. Sylvain, the Romans having lived, loved, married, and died, beneath these Norman skies, went to their long rest in the tombs

lining the roadway — that place of burial marking the claim of those thus buried as worthy of enduring fame.

What has mocking Time written on those vanished tombal sites? Weeds grow now where sonorous Latin verse once made the marble sing with elegiac praise.

Past Roman roads, with their lost or scattered sarcophagi, past turreted châteaux we swept onwards — into the land of the reapers.

Far as the eye could reach was a land of gold. We were in the midst of wheat fields. The rising ground which took us on to Bretteville showed the blond landscape to be at its ripened harvest moment. All through the fields, men and women were bending and moving onwards with the rhythmic motion peculiar to scythe cutters. They bent to their task with the suppleness born of strength.

Those who have argued themselves into the logical conviction that France must be classified among the dying nations — let such leave the safe seclusion of their libraries and air their conclusions in these wheatfields of inland Normandy. Not a harvester was here who would

not have given his grandsires of the anti-Revolutionary days a shock of surprise. Where are the "beasts," shrunken, shrivelled, naked, dying of hunger and cold, who, crouched as beasts crouch, along the roadside, when they rose to their height, were yet seen to be men?

Had I taken no longer drive than this through provincial France, the sight of these sturdy, hardy, harvesters — and a small army they numbered before we passed the last of them at Bretteville — the sight of such as these would have set me thinking. A nation that can recover from such a death-thrust — or a blood-letting — I'll not quibble at a phrase — as that of the Revolution, and rise from its bed of torture stronger, hardier, healthier, sounder, at its core — note the core — than in centuries before, has yet a few vigorous centuries ahead of it, I, for one, cannot help thinking.

## CHAPTER V

### ON THE ROAD TO CAEN AND TOURS

**I**T was just beyond Bretteville that we came upon a road as familiar of feature and aspect as is the face of a friend. For my own part, the particular kind of road before us I have always classed along with those friendships one salutes with respect — and which one prefers to keep at a distance.

The French military high-road, of such inestimable utility to France — to her farmer even more than to her armies — presents everywhere the same utilitarian features. Straight as the points to be touched will allow, hard as duty, bordered by trees laid out on a system whose meagre shade seems to delight in refusing to carry out the benevolent but mistaken intentions of the Government, — the trim but rigid-faced military high-road is the road of all others to avoid in this shapely land of France.

A strolling company of players, abroad upon the white macadam, were of quite another mind. Their carts and wagons having come to a stop, the road was aswarm with the tatterdemalion brood such "companies of the king's highway" exude, in any age and in all lands. Of the tallest of the bandit-looking gypsies we asked our way.

"*Tout droit, m'sieur* — straight ahead — and the most beautiful road in the world!" was cried out to us, exultingly, by a tall gypsy athlete. He himself was walking along the "most beautiful road in the world" with a prodigious swagger. He also was going down to the Fair, — he said — "*avec ça* — with that" — and he pointed to the tent poles, the tenting, and the picture-painted carts. The latter were peopled at every window and peephole with the bristling eyes of gypsy tight-rope dancers, jugglers, and the Amazonian queens of the ring — all in the rigid economy of misfits circus performers consider just the thing for the road.

"With that, I shall make a good week of it. At Caen — ah yes! we did a great business at



Caen — *très gais les Caennais*. At Falaise there are mostly peasants " — he shrugged his lean but tightly-muscled shoulders — " But the Norman peasant is rich — he will pay to see a good thing." The dark head nodded backwards, with the pride of one who knows what he has.

Through the windows of the next cart, two dusky-skinned girls, with drooping locks, framing small, delicately sculptured features and dazzling teeth, grinned and snickered.

We had seen the best of the show, doubtless, and for nothing.

The gypsy's praise of the Caen high-road we conceded to be not wholly unfounded. The trees were at an age when benevolence is the first of all virtues; their shade was of the massive, maternal sort. Within the green light, enriched by the amber of a setting August sun, villages and farmhouses were suffused with an indescribable glow. The land through the tree trunks, as luminous as the tinted horizon, seemed a blond sea of light. Rough and coarsened features that looked up from the roadside, above wheelbarrows

or ploughs, were momentarily transfigured. Along the door-steps and stone benches — at Langannerei, at Potigny, the village housewives, as they sat and chattered, seemed to have taken on unreal, phantasmal outlines and garments. Caps and homespun aprons were dyed as in a bath of gold. Timbered house fronts, the flowers in their tiny pots, the very pigs and turkeys — not a feature in the landscape but came in for its share of that lovely moment of illumination.

As if to incarnate the beauty of the hour and its rustic features, out of the ripe wheat fields, whose edges she had skirted, a milkmaid started to cross the road. She waited for our cart to be gone. The pose she took, in that instant of repose, was one that has been rendered as classic as that of the Venus de Milo. With full milk-jug poised on her broad shoulder, with arm and hand outstretched to the full length of the leather strap attached to the urn-shaped Normandy *canne*, this rustic divinity had the same goddess-like nobility of carriage and outline Millet has transfixed on his canvas. To look upon his model thus in the flesh, —

in all the convincing realities of coarse knit stockings, work-colored hands, and face and open throat brown as a nut, was to see proved anew the axiom that the greatest artists are those who transfigure the commonplace into the ideal.

As a substitute for those wondrous Normandy maidens, presented to us now, alas! solely through the medium of colored prints or such operettas as "*Les Cloches de Corneville*," I recommend this particular order of milkmaid. Like the immortal Mrs. Glass's receipt for jugged hare—first, however, you must catch your milkmaid.

Where are they fled, those fair young girls and opulent-featured women, who formerly proved the ease of their purses, by their dainty dressing? When they went forth, pillion fashion, what gay striped gowns, shortened to show the clocked stockings and neat heelless slippers, what coquetry in choice of apron stuffs, what rich lace floating from the high peak of their wondrous headgear! In the tying of their very kerchiefs, in the grace of the knot, they thus proclaimed not only the universal feminine

idolatry of dress—but the possession of a certain lost leisure. One must go as far as Arles nowadays, and to the Sundays of St. Rémy-de-Provence, to see the women of the fields gowned and kerchiefed like queens on the one festal day of their workaday week.

The costume of Falaise, as preserved to us through the old prints, was peculiarly rich in elaboration of details. How the gay ribbons, high pyramidal coifs, and brilliant striped skirts would have set off the ripe charms, the melting eyes, and creamy skins of the maidens who bent over their geranium-boxes, in the villages we passed, to see who were going to the Fair.

That man has a soul, and eyes, above the costume of the period, was proved by the numbers of young farmers who found it wisest to go slowly as they passed the geranium-boxes.

A half-dozen very promising flirtations were started, within full view of the road. One or two of the more energetic rustic gallants temporarily relinquished all thoughts of Fairs and the morrow. The scene between the

couples was played with all the finish of a good stage performance. The girls suddenly disappeared, only to reappear at the doorstep of their blooming little huts, or houses, where their adorers were waiting, to lead them to the village tavern-tables.

For we were nearing Falaise, and the jocund spirit of the Fair was tripping a few measures here in the open fields and hamlets.

As we approached Falaise the dust and the din thickened. All the neighboring farmers whose horses were being driven or led to the Fair were crowding the white road. Tree trunks and hedge-rows were blanched with the dust of the gritty macadam; men's faces were powdered and their blouses were whitened with the loosened particles. The horses alone, in their spirited dashes, had managed to keep the satin of their well-groomed coats spotless.

The air was already thick with the voices of barter and sale, with shouts of welcome, with cries of recognition, with *à demains!* and promises of reunion, within an hour, at various inns and taverns.

At the bottom of a certain hill, there was a visible slackening of the speed of both riders and drivers. A girl, whose head and shoulders alone were visible above the gleaming backs of a herd of cows she was guiding, from one pasture to another, across the road, threw her smile backwards to us. We one and all drew rein to let her pass. A rustic groom, astride a gray mottled Percheron, cut one of her cows with his whip; for behind him were four stallions whose spirits were still untamed by their long cross-country trot.

"Ah! *Dame*, if one must wait for such as these," cried the boy, but he too laughed as he kept his own beasts in hand till the girl had coaxed her cows to their home pastures.

"Fine stallions those!" cried a man suddenly, at our right, poking his head out of a gig. As he leaned forward he showed the high Norman cheek-bones, the keen blue-gray eyes, the arched nose of the true *figure de coq*. "Who sends them?" he cried to the groom.

"They come from Monsieur D ——'s farm."

"Ah, you will be near the square, then, tomorrow?"

“All the day long!” cried back the groom, as, his horse rearing, he gave him a cut that sent him dashing uphill, unhindered by the drag of the horses behind.

Twenty such rendezvous were made in our hearing, as we all slowly crept up the hillside. Not a horse inside of a harness or out, but was looked over, commented upon, or perhaps, silently marked out for a bargain. Besides the press of peasants, of horses, gigs, carts, bicyclists, and the regiment of the town tramp dogs, a great deal of bad language was making its way up the hill. Horses appear to suggest to the least imaginative man the wealth in felicitous phraseology that lies hidden in the bed of profanity. Scarcely a Norman I should say, going up to the Fair grounds yonder, but must have heard either his own, or his wife's family referred to in terms which men reserve, as a rule, for moments of excitement. Some harmless but very-much-in-the-way old women, trundling wheelbarrows piled high with merchandise and garden truck, came in for some of the choicer coinage of opprobrium.

Two handsome wenches, bold of eye and

of massive build, suddenly turned a corner, — and down the hill rolled the stream of oaths.

“ ‘*Cré nom*, — if she is n't a fine one!”

“ No, it's t' other's to my taste. Hey! Hey! there! don't go off like that, — how's a fellow to know you again, — *si on s'envole comme ça?* ”

A hundred eyes followed the somewhat heavy flight of the rustic beauties. In peace now the old women wheeled their burdens up the hill.



## CHAPTER VI

### FALAISE — STREET SCENES

**S**UDDENLY the hill widened. Vistas opened and roads seemed to spring out of unseen valleys. Towards the right a vast mass of wall blocked the sky.

The mass of wall took shape and outline. The curves of a noble tower abutting from an outer wall of masonry defined themselves broadly, solidly, yet with a singular grace and symmetry. The tower was Talbot's Tower and the mass of wall was the great fortress — the Château of Falaise.

The nearer walls of low-browed houses were soon closing in about us, shutting out that momentary glimpse of Normandy's famous stronghold.

The street we were following, and those we looked into sideways, presented a captivating jumble of closely packed houses, of gardens

tumbling down steep hills, and of villas and châteaux aslant upon verdant declivities.

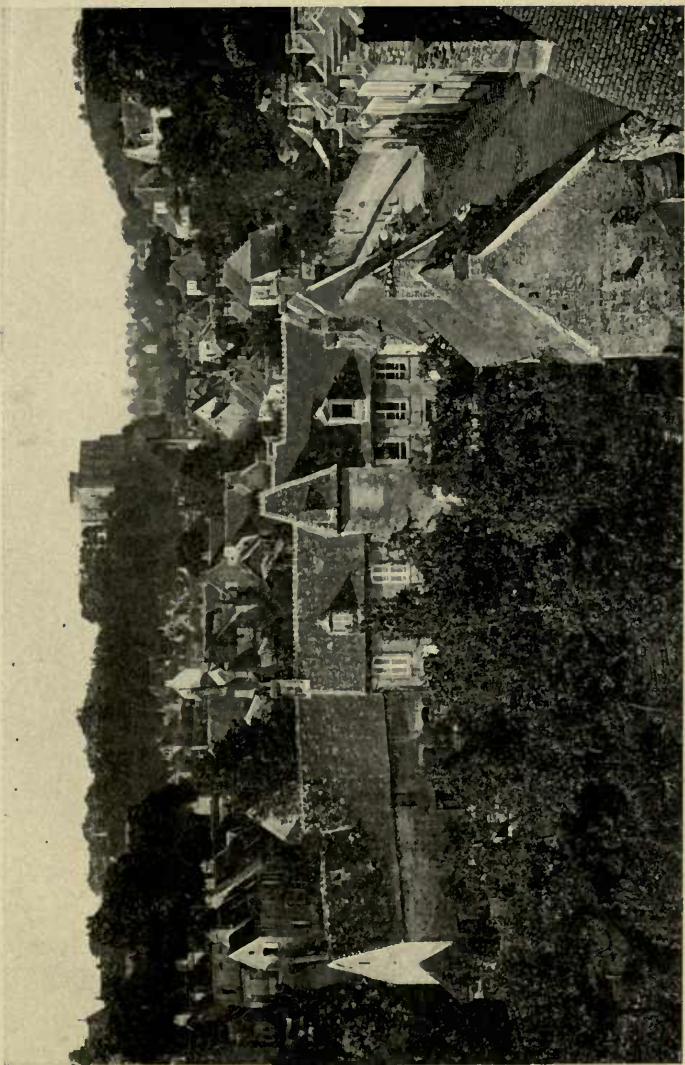
All hill-towns are potent fascinators. Falaise has a charm peculiar to its site. Boat-shaped, it rode the valleys on either side as a ship parts the sea. The billows of the green hillsides pressed and yet were parted from the long keel-shaped cliff.

The farmers and grooms behind and about our wheels had not come to Falaise, however, for the purpose of commenting on its shape. Presently they made the same known to us.

“*Hé! là-bas! On ne s’arrête pas comme ça* — One does n’t block the road like that on a Fair day!” and whips were cracked about our ears with a meaning in their snap. We used our own whip, in sign of our penitence.

Crowded indeed was the square and the street leading upwards to our inn. Peasants, jockeys, townspeople, and the horses — hundreds of the latter — swarmed from surrounding side streets, swelling the groups of those already over-running the narrow Rue d’Argentan.

The cries and shouts were deafening. Horses felt the contagion of the noise — their neighing



*Falaise.*



and whinnying blent with the throaty treble of some donkeys doing chorus work. The crowd being a French crowd, that everybody should be talking at once made the human chatter seem only the more homely and familiar.

Above, from the low-browed houses, women's heads were leaning forth as perilously pushed forwards as the gargoyles that had grinned at us from the cornice of St. Gervais, the church in the Square. Below the house-eaves flags were flying. Every smallest café and *estaminet* was doing its one great business of the year. Those peasants already seated at the little tables, in the gathering twilight, sipping their "*sou de café*" or their absinthe, were the fortunate ones, for they had come early and had thus secured good places.

The shops lining the long high street were small; yet were they profuse in window invitations after the manner of provincial shops; and all of these, also, were obviously doing a roaring trade—the one great week's trade of all the sleepy year. Buyers in shiny blouses; women in thick black worsted gowns caught at

the back in a wedge of gathers, suggestive of past but not forgotten farthingale fashions; women in bonnets; women in caps; or, best of all, wearing their own thick coil of braids; children that were smaller copies of the new conventionalized peasant types, all of these, ruddy of face, eager-eyed, serious-browed, some laughing and chattering like magpies, others chewing the cud of their stolidity abroad as at home, such were the figures composing the groups of the crowds that made progress a difficult art in that narrow, people-packed street.

Horses' heads were almost as thickly grouped about the tiny café tables as were their farmer-owners' caps and blouses. Men bent from the backs of restive Percherons afoam with sweat, to cry out, lustily:

*"Hé! là-bas! le sou de café — 'vec cognac — entends-tu? Hey — I say — ha'pennyworth of coffee, and brandy — do you hear?"*

Gay were the greetings interchanged between the new-comers, the townfolk, and the sippers of the long drinks. These latter were seated comfortably, as if for the week's enter-

tainment, at the crowded tables. Only the horses were restive and impatient. About their pointed ears whips were cracked, but from a purely scenic sense of effect, as any one might see, and as none knew better than the powerful cobs and stallions, whose muscles were aquiver from other causes than those born of fear.

That gossip, however, must be made to yield up its last secret, was more important, even, than that the horses should be put to bed. Jean of St. Lô could not be parted, even for a half hour from Marthe-of-the-Doves'-Eyes at Falaise, till all the surprises of the year had been rehearsed. How Henri had died, and how little he left; how all the Étiennes had quarrelled before *le vieux* was fairly cold in his winding sheet; how Nicolas had got the better of Paul in the great law-suit; who had n't married whom, and what the wrong brides' *dots* were — and certain other still more amazing facts pertaining to the much-wished-for increase of France's population, but in ways reprehensible — without benefit of clergy — such were the histories of human frailty, success and dis-

appointment that the peasants on horseback told to those lolling at their ease on the sidewalk,—and to the strangers within the gates.

The noise of the crowded little thoroughfare followed us to our inn. Its courtyard was aswarm with visitors. There was a discouragingly dense pack of vehicles of all sorts and shapes, and centuries, ranged against the sidewalks. Also, the inn stables were full, the hostler affirmed. His tone was one of deep reproach. As if all Calvados—all France indeed, did not know that the Falaise inns—and of all its inns, this one, its pride,—were filled to bursting this week of the Fair!

“*Pour les chambres,—ah oui!* As for the rooms of monsieur, yes, they are ready, we can show him up at once. Happily, monsieur secured them in time. But, *pour le cheval, mon Dieu, monsieur,—il y a bien des chevaux qui dormiront à la belle étoile cette nuit.*”

It was indeed at the sign of the Beautiful Star that our valiant little steed put up for the



night, as we found on the morrow, when it took no less a force than all the stable yard could muster to catch the gay reveller who, in love with his vasty green chamber, had taken a notion to explore his domain.

## CHAPTER VII

### TO THE FAIR GROUNDS

**T**HE sun, the next morning, had obviously risen with the knowledge of what was expected of him. Never did a Fair day wear a more festal aspect. The inn courtyard was as gay as if tricked out in pure gold. Everything shone, glittered, glistened, or sparkled. The groups of peasants sitting under the bright arbors, dipping their bread in their chicory, called coffee, were obviously under the spell of the fine morning. Good humor, and a genuine holiday spirit were abroad in the air.

The cries of hostlers and coachmen; the stamping of coach-horses, reeking with sweat, from their long, cross-country run; the loud calls for coffee from the coach owners; more carts and hooded gigs following fast upon the coach, — such were the cries and the scene we left behind us in the little courtyard, as we

made our way up to the high street, on our way to the Fair grounds.

It is at Guibray, an old-time suburb of Falaise that the Fair has been held these ten centuries or more. Now so completely a part of the town as to be practically indistinguishable from it, yet does Guibray, with peculiar antique pride, unknown in modern suburban districts, maintain its separateness.

The old town, in the soft August light was aflame with colors and contrasts. Above the Eastern note bright awnings give to all the streets, the blazing crudities of colored signs, of dressed and undressed figures on the posters carried the eye upward to the tender grays of sloping roofs. Under the stone gabled windows were the usual high-perched gardens on the edges of the sills. The morning light was rioting in swinging vines, nasturtiums, and the merry geraniums.

From some of the richly moulded old windows rustic attempts at decorative effects were visible. Flags, rugs, bits of fine linen, were hung from wrought-iron balustrades, or from stone window ledges. Cotton caps, however,

topping thickly wrinkled old faces, were the most popular Falaisian decoration. What countless generations of just such faces had looked forth from these sixteenth and seventeenth century houses to watch the peasants, merchants, jockeys, and noblemen go up to the Fair at Guibray!

Although the present procession moving up to the Place aux Chevaux was but a very poor show indeed, compared to what these experienced old houses had seen, in the great days of the Fair, the crowd and the town, on that August morning, tricked one into the conviction that this last year of our dying century was not all dull commonplace.

Look where one would, as one moved onward, there was a picture for the eyes. The vistas opening out through the courtyards made dazzling perspectives, with the sun rays focussing on brassy saucepans or mounds of hay. From a cluster of low shop windows the eye suddenly took a plunge of a hundred or two feet downwards to light on a stately château with well-groomed parterres and correctly trimmed trees.

Of such aspects of the old town, there was barely time for more than a glance, for the stir and impetus of the crowd of horses and peasants kept us swiftly moving onwards.

The horses were everywhere. They dashed out of courtyards, their morning spirits far too much for the peasant owners and grooms to manage. Large, small, old and young, not a creature on four feet but seemed to know it to be their own peculiar day. If ever horses proved they knew how to celebrate their own festivity, these prancing, curvetting, dancing horses did on their way to their Fair.

Humanly conscious they seemed, and as sensible as any of the two-footed, to the contagion of motion precipitated by their own prodigious activity. They made light of their bright halters. As for the curb, they laughed it to scorn. Dancing was what this morning was made for. To take a few steps along a forbidden stretch of sidewalk, or to polka innocently but perilously close to a timid china merchant's shop, or to waltz gayly toward an appetizing array of pastry with only a shining window pane for protection—even staid and

sober Percherons were not proof against such temptations as these on such a day. Only the old, the rheumatic, the blind, or the lame, went staidly up to take their stands about the square.

A sharp turn into a side street brought us to the great surprise of the day.

To hear that a horse fair is held in a square before a church awakens no particular thirst of curiosity to behold the same. We banquet daily on facts drawn from a world whose strangeness and romance are served up to us with our morning coffee. The eye has, however, preserved a certain freshness of vision. Sup though we may on horrors, no man can look upon either a striking novelty or a hideous crime without learning the great truth that the seeing eye remains perennially young in point of impressionability.

The scene before us was set with a naïve disregard of appropriateness. A Norman-Gothic church stood solidly erect upon the hill of Guibray. Its Gothic apse fronted a wide suburban street. On either side, the richly carved pinnacles topping the bold buttresses were set about with decorative



*The Horse-Fair.*





roofs and antique-faced houses. Architecturally, town and church made an harmonious blend. It was on and below the wide parvis that a strange and wholly novel scene made church and town play but a secondary role.

On a great square below the noble Norman fabric thousands of horses were tethered, were held in leash, or were springing into motion. Gray, white, mottled, brown, and black hides shone in the August sun like unworn satin. Hundreds of men moved in and out among this army of horses.

Up to the very church walls the merchants had planted their merchandise. To long wooden poles hundreds of horses were tethered. Sheds were built so close to the buttressed sides that their stretched canvases seemed an integral part of the whole.

The lovely structure was, indeed, the pivotal point about which centred all the stir and whirl of the Fair. Horses' necks were as close about the iron railings as berries on a stalk; across their backs a child might have walked and come to no harm, so tightly wedged

were the flanks that stood ranged in line, facing the church's walls. The church itself, so far from being held aloof from this scene of barter and sale, was very much a part of the whole performance, so to speak. Its gable end and Gothic porch were festooned with garlands. Across its gray-faced walls scarlet cloths hung loose to the caprice of the wind. Flagstuffs were planted in the flying buttresses, and the Tricolor wound and unwound its flexible coils about the lace of Gothic finials. This festal note of color, we learned later, had been a part of the decorations in honor of the installation of the new parish curé. It was greatly to the advantage of the picturesque ensemble that the parish had delayed the removal of the firs and bunting.

This note of festivity was, indeed, clearly the accepted key in which were set the graver commercial transactions. These sober Normans had not walked or driven hundreds of miles to go to a Mass. Even in an ordinary horse trade a joyous note goes always along with the bargaining. In such transactions some one is certain to have profited at his brother's ex-

pense. Men are still singularly naïve in their prompt instinctive impulse to celebrate such a victory. Here at Guibray, for the whole of a week, horse-trading and buying were in the very air,—was it a matter of wonderment that laughter and merriment crowded out even crabbed Norman greed?

The great square was as gay as a bridal. But a fair is better than a wedding; it is more to the Norman taste. Long slow talks; long slow bargains; above all, long slow drinks—these are the processes best suited to the keen, yet careful Norman wits, and to their deeply-veined sensuousness.

In these earlier days of the Fair, the friendlier, gayer aspects of peasant life and character were the more obvious presentments. Every one was in high good humor. The bright, clear skies, the sparkling-eyed, ruddy-cheeked girls and women; the eager dashing horses; the cheers and toasts ringing up from the café tables encircling the Fair grounds;—all these elements contributed to a general feeling of high enjoyment.

As we moved in and out about the groups,

a certain elation, an extraordinarily agreeable sense of pleasurable excitement grew up within. Imperceptibly one's own identity was lost; one became a part of the scene, an actor among actors, partisan of all the magnificent statements made or refuted in the teeth of the splendid merchandise walking about on four feet.

Each group of men and horses represented a different variety of man and horse. No two were alike; they were as infinite in presentment of composite qualities as only heredity and selection can break up and re-set the human and animal types.

Out of the inextricable mass one began to discern signs of a certain rude order in the proceedings. Out on the square, above the long balustrades, tall posts were planted; on these latter wooden squares were nailed. There were signs bearing the words "Saddle Horses," "Brittany Horses," "Normandy Horses," etc. Beneath the posts the horses of each class were grouped.

One could thus pass in review and at one's leisure the several unique breeds of horseflesh

classified under the distinctive heads of the Anglo-Norman and the pure Normandy horse. One could trace even the effects of cross-breeding — go from stock to stock, comparing, criticising, weighing faults and qualities.

The three most prominent groups were the three varieties of horseflesh bred and raised in the Normandy stud farms and pastures: the Norman horse — the ideal carriage and saddle horse; the *cheval Breton* — reared in the moist pastures close to Brittany, bought not only by the French Government but by German and Italian officers, for artillery purposes; and certain crossed varieties of the Norman draught horse and mare that furnish the omnibus and tramway companies of Paris with their best and most lasting “bussers.” Of these varieties there were thousands from which to choose. The Percherons, whose very name stands as a synonym for the king of all draught horses, were to be traced in all stages of youth, age, and decay. At every turning of the glance the eyes would light upon the scene familiarized to all the world by Rosa Bonheur’s masterly presentment of Percherons

in full action, ridden by peasant grooms; pictures instinct with high animality of stir and motion, luminous in color, and as rich in contrast of grouping as the groups were infinite in attraction.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HORSE-TRADING

**D**OCILE as were, for the most part, this vast concourse of horses, once released from the imprisoning chain or rope, and their mettle showed itself. The square of the bald earth was everywhere sending up light clouds of dust raised by prancing, rushing, trotting horses.

A magnificent stallion, kicking up the dust behind his clean hoofs, was carrying a peasant groom hanging on the rope-bridle, along with an irresistible rush.

Some women from upper windows laughed down upon the lad and his frantic efforts to keep his feet upon the ground. Two serious peasants, briskly walking, talking as they quickened their pace, had only eyes for the splendid creature, as he swept along, his muscles all in play.

Grooms in scarlet or green vests, with gaudy neckties, — the uniform of the national stud, — were astride of glossy-skinned beasts whose quieter-trained paces were being judged by smartish buyers in top hats and white waist-coats.

At every turning of the glance, sudden breaks were being made by men away from the central groups. Lads with open shirts, showing bronzed sinewy necks, and faces aflame with excitement, would throw a leg across a horse's back only to find themselves astride his neck, or over it. To the shouting chorus of rude laughter, the rope-rein would be seized anew, and once again the amateur jockey would strive to hold his seat.

Into these short trial trips the horses themselves entered as if with conscious zest of energy. Before the short rider's whip could touch them, they were off, their movements full of life, their impetuous dashes into by-streets and the upper and smaller square bringing into play all their spirit and muscular power.

Stout, serious-browed men in long driving coats were in thick groups about the rows of



horses whose giant flanks and rich fetlocks proved their Percheron breeding. The *cheval Breton* — the Brittany horses — and the Percherons were the coveted prizes, not only for French buyers, but for export.

Two fair-haired Swedes were lifting the great hoofs and pulling down the lips of two Brittany colts, whose mottled gray hides shone like figured satin in the noon sun. Some French officers in uniform, their waxed moustaches high in air, had the nonchalant ease of saunterers, as they passed from group to group of the tethered beasts.

“They are going to buy, later, for the Government,” we heard it whispered as we passed them.

Some Italians were unmistakable purchasers; a half-dozen Bretons were being put through their paces, while the two gentlemen — possibly from Verona — so far forgot to wear the thin disguise of their atrocious French as to turn critic in their own fluent tongue. Close to these latter were the buyers of one of the great French tramway companies, and about these there circled an ever-thickening group of bloused farmers and horse-raisers.

A brigandish-looking individual, of generous girth, with piercing black eyes, was telling two shrewd, clever-faced Normans that they were trying to make him party to a "*sale affaire*"—to a "nasty bargain." The "bargain" was a string of Percheron colts, as handsome a looking lot of cattle as any among the four thousand. The gentleman from the Midi had that talent for using words imaginatively which is the gift of the brothers of Tartarin.

"There's a horse for you — grand action — that! and reliable — I tell you — an infant in arms could ride him!" a peasant close by us was saying, with quiet pride in the noble brute his peasant groom was trotting past us — the latter's loose shirt ballooning behind him, as the steed dashed round a street corner.

"You want something quiet to drive in single or double harness? Come this way, my friend — *par ici, mon ami* — I have the very thing — young — strong — *solide!* Ah, *mais je vous le dis, moi* — flanks like oak" and the gentlemanly-looking Norman, whose blouse seemed worn as a mask for disguising his opulent state of body and presumably of purse,

swept his customer up the low incline towards a row of horses tethered beneath the western church porch. The horse shown, we remarked, seemed not to belie the owner's praise of him.

But there were others. There were long rows of martyrs — the martyrs of this and countless other seasons. About such groups, we noted fewer buyers and a degree of eloquence and a passion of protestation unmatched elsewhere.

“That horse spavined — and blows — you say — *vous me dites cela, vous?* *Sacré nom de* — but I will show you if he is an accordion!” and the maligned mare was quickly mounted.

“Go, *ma belle* — go then — and show to the world thy lungs of an elephant” and the mare with the elephantine lungs breathed soft as any sucking dove — for a good five minutes' run. Then, when she began to play her accordion tunes, her wary Norman turned actor. He brought his beast to a sharp halt, as he mopped the drops of moisture from his clever brow.

“She’s been sold five times already — and returned as often,” smiled a squat, cross-eyed peasant at my elbow.

“She must make a good deal of money for her owner.”

“I believe you — she is better than a bank balance, that one,” and the squat shoulders shook their laughter in the teeth of the money-making mare. A few minutes later we found our critic himself in the full frenzy of a sale. He was pointing to a horse in the last stages of decay.

“Done for — this one! He is as strong as an ox, I tell you. Underfed, perhaps, I grant you — *je ne vous dis pas non* — and then I’ve been making him work a bit, but sick, never! *Au grand jamais!* He will never have an illness — this one!” Never but one — my friend — only one, before dying of old age and starvation.

A group of Lilliputian asses, with bright bits of scarlet and yellow in their bridles were tethered away from the main mass of horses — to balustrades placed close to the house fronts. As they swung their tiny heads, the bells they

wore rang in rude unison. Their keeper was a striking figure among the florid, roseate-hued Normans with their sombre blouses. Over a bright-colored vest and loose jacket, the handsome lad wore a light cloak. In his pale gray felt, of sombrero breadth of rim, a gay feather was stuck, and his rusty brown stockings were laced to the knee with rope-lacings. When the Provençal "*Ze-Ze*" ricocheted his bastard French, it needed not the boy's rich eye tints and swarthy skin to betray his southern heritage.

"He's from Marseilles — he comes every year," an innkeeper announced pompously from his arched doorway — to let us know the Fair drew men from the ends of the earth.

"Does he drive the creatures — *les bêtes* — up here?"

"*Dieu que non!* they come by train — they are like sheep for goodness."

Away rang the bells of the Midi, from the asses' necks, in a merry jingle, as if chorussing their *Te Deum* of thanks at the invention of steam that makes of long journeys a single

night of travel. Their driver changed his posture, from a standing on one laced leg to the other, threw back his handsome head, and turned his disdainful eye on the crowds circling about the horses. The eye of the Midi is a speaking eye. And that dark orb from Marseilles said, as loud as if its speech had been a blast through a trumpet, that men who bought horses instead of asses were no better than mules.

A fair young keeper of a group of asses and donkeys who had taken her stand somewhat away from the crowd was a more successful vendor. The quiet self-possessed grace of this girl whose merchandise lay in donkeys would have made her a success in other and higher places than her improvised stall against a hedge-row. There were buyers in plenty about the quiet group. When we passed her, a little before high noon, she was making her last entry. She had sold her lot.

"Where are they going, did you ask, Madame? To——, near Paris, to the Restaurant in the Tree. Parisians like that, it



*Some Buyers.*



*A Sale of Donkeys.*





appears — a donkey-ride before dinner is a good digestive” — and she snapped her silver-mounted account book. Still she smiled as she laid her light whip across her donkey’s back — for there was another question we could not forbear asking.

“And where do I go now? Oh! for more donkeys — *nous faisons toutes les foires* — we go to all the Fairs — till the season is over — *allons là*, — What are you about?” The whip came down on an over-ambitious donkey’s back, whose gormandizing instinct had led him in a near garden, — with the sure touch of one who knew the one raw spot and how to find it.

## CHAPTER IX

### WOMEN VENDORS

**W**OMEN were to be met, indeed, all over the Fair, and as much at home as if in their own barnyard or kitchen.

In this great Republic of women, where the sex for centuries has acquired, through the most venerable of laws — that of custom — the right to transact any business or to sell any article or object sold by men, not a Fair in France but proclaims the equality of the sexes. In the Horse Fair at Guibray every right — except some of those granted by law — demanded for woman by her suffragist sisters elsewhere, is hers. She has won and holds her place down among the horses.

There were a dozen or more horse-traders — of the so-called weaker sex, in among the groups of horses and men at the Fair.

Just why a passion among women for a raising and selling of horseflesh should tend to

the growth of a formidable pair of moustaches I know not. Yet even their own horses hardly dared to look these hirsute ladies in the eye. Perhaps for the same reason their peasant husbands wore a saddened, deprecatory air.

These feminine dealers in horseflesh had not put aside all their women's wiles, however, when they took the whip in hand.

A jolly-faced Provençal, who was on the look-out for a good "carter" was seized upon by a short squat peasant, whose muslin cap and woman's skirts alone proclaimed her sex — until she spoke. Then she was twice a woman — for she was French.

"Ah! monsieur — here you are — at last! I have been waiting for you. No, I would not sell — although they have been pestering me all the morning! No, I said — I await Monsieur Gaspaud, from the South — he knows a good thing when he sees it — and here, monsieur, here is your horse! Ah! what do you think of that, *hein*? Strong enough, I hope — look at the power of him! what shoulders! hey? — and flanks? and his coat — where do you find a coat like that? And vices — not

one! It is I—I myself who have bred him for you. Ah monsieur! but it breaks the heart to part with a horse like that!”

Then was the comedy of sentiment played out to its finish. A stout checkered handkerchief was produced; a resounding blast was skilfully managed, and the two ferret eyes were conscientiously wiped of a moisture which might indeed have surprised them—had it been there.

The Provençal was only a man. He walked away with the horse.

A sister trader joined the happy saleswoman. “And so you got rid of your gelding?”

“Yes, and a good thing it was, too—I’ve been blistering him this fortnight.” The two laughed above their coarse homespun aprons, their muslin caps nodding in concert, as their tall whips shook in their vein-ribbed hands.

In sharp contrast to this scene, with its suggestive Teniers coarseness and humor, was another of the true modern high-life *genre*.

Into our inn courtyard, one noon, a smart cart rattled. The spirited little cob had been skilfully reined in at just the right instant

to prevent collision with an officer in uniform whose mount was less amenable to discipline than that of the new-comer. An upward glance of the lady whip — and her lips parted. As she smiled her recognition, she leaned forward across her dashboard.

“ *Quelle chance — bon Dieu, quelle chance !* *Figurez-vous* — imagine to yourself — *cher capitaine*, that I drove over this morning — yes — all the way from Bénonville. *Matinale?* At dawn, I tell you, at dawn I rose — to get to this wretched fair — and for what, if you please, but just this! To find you — yes — you, and to have you pick me out a saddle-horse. Mine has gone lame — I broke his knee, I fear, the other day, at Deauville. I heard there were some fine mares for sale here from Monsieur A——’s stud-farm — and here I am! ’

The lady had sprung to the ground, had put her whip in its socket, had caressed her veil to rights, and shaken hands with her captain, — all at one and the same instant — as it seemed.

In the same instant she had discovered our own little group, and was soon a part of it.

What? — we also had come all the way from Dives, and not even to buy horses — merely to see them? *Tiens!* — it appeared that this Horse Fair was worth seeing, after all? How had we over there in America (the “over there” was done with a gesture which relegated America to the beyond-of-the-grave) how had we ever managed to hear of the Fair of Guibray? Astonishing, simply astounding — we Americans! She thereupon gave us a facial proof, by the lifting of her expressive, finely-curved eyebrows, and a widening of her large eyes, of the mental effort within to conceive of such folly as ours being committed by a Frenchman — much less by a Frenchwoman.

With a grace that revealed centuries of charming ancestresses trained to the art, she proceeded to make use of our inconceivable folly — and the experience gained by it.

Would we show her the Fair? Would we really take her in among all those horses, and peasants, and grooms? Were we sure it was not dangerous? Not too unbearably dirty? *Dieu!* what a frolic! She proceeded promptly to thank the good God for having inspired her

to get up at dawn, for having prompted her to be sufficiently audacious to take that long drive across country, just because she knew Captain X. was stationed here and bought horses for the Government—and therefore might be trusted to help her pick out a good jumper.

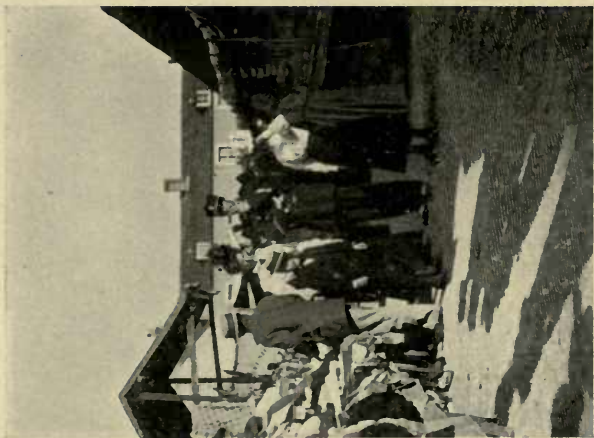
The lady and the laces of her salmon pink petticoats made the tour of the Fair in safety. It was after the noon breakfast we in our turn were taken to see the buying of her hunter.

For the best thoroughbreds, as a rule, one must go further than Falaise; one must go as far north as Dozulé, to the stud-farm of Monsieur le Monnier, or to the famous racing stables of Monsieur Aumont at Victot, near Dives. In these and other stud-farms in Normandy many of the horses are raised which are the future race-winners at Chantilly, at Auteuil, and Longchamps. Some Norman thoroughbred mares and stallions are, however, shown at Guibray. These choice animals are not, quite naturally, to be found among the common groups. One is taken to view such with a certain degree of ceremony.

A smart groom piloted our party away from the noise and dust of the Fair ground down a quiet by-street to a more or less distant and more or less private stable. Here in a large commodious stall we were shown a remarkably beautiful mare — a thoroughbred hunter, winner of a prize for jumping. The lady of the château, after a masterly investigation of the mare's points, bought her on the spot.

“Buying a horse is like getting married — if you find what you like — seize it at once. If you hesitate, you are lost,” was the lady's laughing rejoinder to the Captain's comment on her precipitancy.





*A Scene at the Fair of Booths.*



*Some Peasant Critics.*



## CHAPTER X

### THE FAIR OF BOOTHS

**T**HE lady of the château was in no sense a remarkable figure at the Fair, except in so far as a beautiful woman is always remarkable and remarked.

The streets early in the morning were full of carts filled with knick-knacks, or piled high with farm products, trundled by women.

Great families of women of a Biblical strength in numbers filled chars-à-bancs to overflowing. Once near the Fair, the women could be seen thriftily turning into a side street towards the open meadows. Here, in a friendly field, the cart would be swung, siding up to other carts, one of the younger women springing down to hold the restive horse or mare, as old and young dismounted. Then did the Norman peasant woman show the skill and power that come with the hard labor of a farm. The

horse was unharnessed in a jiffy; the cart rolled closer to the others as if it were a bunch of feathers; — one girl going for a bucket of water, while others took out the bag of oats, the bundles of hay, — for, at the inn yonder, there must be nothing to pay for the horse's keep save the two *sous* for his stall.

Up beyond the church and its *Place aux Chevaux*, at the top of the hill, where the Fair booths are placed — it was there the women were to be seen in their greatest force. Among the dealers in china-ware, in cheap laces, and cheaper silks, in under-wear, and in those thousand and one gimcrack absurdities whose chief and sole uses appear to lie in making modern fairs as tawdry as most of the articles offered for sale are valueless, the saleswomen outnumbered the men ten to one.

Old faces there were, whose sallow skins were ripened to a brighter orange by the snow of the white cotton caps. Wrinkled as crumpled leaves though some of these women's faces and hands might be, strong and sonorous would be the voice through which, above the din and hubbub, you were appealingly in-



*"By the slice, Madame."*



formed that you could buy your melon by the slice.

“*A la coupe*—à la coupe, Madame,—by the slice—by the slice, Madame! Where are such slices to be had?”

In among these groups of booths, the hubbub and din were of another order of sound than those to be heard on the church square. The noise was shriller, the voices being chiefly soprani. Along with this lighter quality of tone one felt a more debonair spirit of gayety abroad beneath these striped awnings and huge scarlet umbrellas. The selling of cheap silk remnants from the great Lyons warehouses, or of butter and eggs, are acts not so fraught with possibility of tragic surprises as is the buying of horses. Even the officers regained their spirited gayety of step when buying Egyptian cigarettes of a fez-hatted Greek from Paris.

Every article of consumption a farm can produce was temptingly spread out beneath the sheds and huge umbrellas. Women pointed to their geese with the pride of expert raisers; the merits of cheeses were sung in no uncer-

tain notes ; roses and milk were offered under the same stall by girls whose creamy complexions seemed served up as a natural advertisement ; and as for the mountains of eggs offered and the rashers of bacon, in this one Fair alone, there must have been enough of such to have fed all Normandy.

How can one hope to give the best part of the Fair? — the strong dominant human note — the groups of peasants that gathered and broke, only to re-form elsewhere? the laughter, the greetings, — the exchange between two sun-dyed faces of the thrice-given Norman kiss? the strange oddities of sound in the crossing of the various *patois* jargon, that kept its bass and treble high above the groan of tied calves, and the protesting cackle of hens in bondage?

One huge peasant, whose width of girth made his crisp purple blouse take about a certain region of his body, the shape of a bandage, was tendering for sale some tame bullfinches in a cage the size of a mouse-trap. Close to him, a widow, in a long crêpe veil, and a bonnet modelled on approved Parisian



*Bon Marché* styles, felt no sense of incongruity in the holding of a pendent rabbit in one hand, and two captive hens in the other. Besides her merchandise, she had brought her family cares to market.

“What — *au nom du bon Dieu* — am I to do with a tiresome little ragamuffin, who, at daylight, is off with all the *gars* of the town, smoking cigarettes, if you please!”

She asked the question of a neighbor in short homespun skirts and a white cotton cap. Her answer came from a handsome, flirtatious-eyed peasant, whose blue scarf was tied with a courting jauntiness above his neat blouse. In her case, the days of distressed widowhood seemed numbered.

The August sun, meanwhile, was as ardent as ever. He poured the strength of his glance, unhindered, on maiden lip and velvet throat. The warmth of his midsummer caress was unwittingly confessed in the more provocative swing of full hips, and in laughter that sung itself into raptures of content. In this Fair of booths, Cupid was making the most of what was left of the summer — as he was at

other fairs held weekly at Caen, Dives, Dozulé, and a hundred other Norman towns and villages.

This Fair of booths and awnings has its counterparts in France from the boulevards bleached by the suns of Provence to the sea-washed hamlets and towns of Upper Normandy. One may see everywhere the same cheap assortment of wearing apparel and earthenware; the same admixture of farm products and German absurdities; hear the same braying of the hurdy-gurdies attached to the same revolving wooden horses, and watch the same gypsy carts outside the Fair grounds sending forth their "strong men" and their "queens of the rope" in tights and gold-fringed velvets, which the sun cruelly strips of their last vestige of illusion. But that for which the Fair of Guibray is chiefly remarkable—apart from its horse show—is not to be found elsewhere.

Nowhere else, in all France, have I seen such nobly built men—men of such stature, such strength and length of limb, and such breadth of girth; nor faces at once so healthful and so full of those forces which make for character building. Turn where one would—

to the groups circulating in and about the horses: or to the long inn tables set upon the narrow sidewalks — and filled again and again with hungry peasants eager for the noon meal; whether one looked upon the lusty lads ripening to early manhood, as much men at eighteen, as never will be the puny Parisian at thirty; or whether one lifted the eyes to encounter serious-eyed, massively built farmers, in the full flush of life's tide — wherever one looked or turned, it was to see the strength of France before one. Here are the men who, again and again, have given Europe its surprises; who, centuries ago, went forth — they and their horses — to start a new race across the seas and, so persistent was and is their type, that here one still may see the parent stock from which was struck the image of England's Englishmen.

Along the coast the Norman peasant has largely lost his individuality of aspect. The obliterating finger of contact with many men of many worlds has smoothed away his more distinguishing characteristics. In these remoter districts, where Norman habits, customs,

and traditions, are as inrooted as are its giant oaks and beeches, the peasant is still the brother of those hardy sires of the stalwart race of farmers and yeomen that have given to England its mighty arm of power.



*A Typical Norman*



## CHAPTER XI

### SOME NIGHT SCENES

**I**N among these groups of peasants there were certain faces and figures one seemed to have met elsewhere. These familiar countenances were at times to be seen bending over a horse's hoof, peering, with an absent air, into a veteran Percheron's mouth, or one met them at nearer quarters, toasting half boozy peasants at the café tables.

Rakishly dressed, masquerading as Englishmen on their travels; or less conspicuous in the blouse of a horse-breeder or in the gayly striped vest of the jockey, whatever the assumed garb or costume, — here was the world of swindlers come down to Falaise.

Since time immemorial they have gathered here, we learned. The Fair, in its great historic days, was full of gypsies and acrobats, who, when not professionally engaged, em-

ployed their leisure in counterfeiting gentlemen riders in search of a good mount or naïve peasants on the look-out for a gay half-hour.

After three days of horse trading, the most ascetic of farmers relaxes the austerity of his habits. After the hard bargains comes the hard drinking. This is the moment patiently awaited by the black band — “*la bande noire.*”

To lure a peasant to one of the darker, dimmer cafés, on the pretence of closing the sale talked over in bright light of day; to tempt him, after the stiff brandy has begun its devil's work, to show the wily customer the horse or mare in question for a final convincing proof of his merits and powers; for other mysterious members of the dark brotherhood to close in, and to walk off with the animal, while the half-drunken owner is still in the happy throes of argumentation — this is a trick so old one wonders there are men still born to whom its practice is a novelty.

“*Ah-h ! — 'cré-nom-de-D — ! Hi — there ! Thieves ! Murder ! Help ! Catch him — I say ! a gold piece to any one who'll catch him, I say. Tonnerre-r-r-e de Dieu — if I catch him !!*”



Such was the hoarse cry that startled the sippers of coffee and brandy about the little tables the last night of our stay. The night had fallen. Only the stars and a few trembling gas jets below them were lighting the town.

“Ah — that’s old Duchesnel! I wonder what’s up now!” cried a stout peasant above his tall glass.

Through the dusk of the night a certain horse had been led, at a brisk trot, through the crowded street, by a small, quick-footed, well-dressed man, to whom other people’s toes and legs were only as so many objects to be hit or hurt — when in his or his horse’s way.

The yelling peasant, with scant locks streaming in the light night wind, and the red gone to purple in his terror-stricken face, dancing through the crowd in his frenzied flight, was scattering gossips and groups right and left.

Some of the younger men and lads were soon after the stolen horse and the gentlemanly thief with a rush. But fainter and fainter grew the clickety clack that came as the ringing answer down the long street, that one who knew how to put a good horse to his paces

had vanished into the night along with his spoils.

The groups of peasants that had streamed out of cafés and house doors now returned to their cups and their gossip. The disconsolate loser was considerably advised to drown his sorrows, at least for the night, in the bowl, that, like remorse, reserves its worst dregs for an uncertain to-morrow.

After the din and shrill of the talk had subsided, the high street settled down to an unwonted calm.

In the open, brightly lit shops, groups of rosy-hued farmers were still holding their smoking bees; still sitting in state, wearing their high silk caps; yet was the traffic of talk among them as sensibly diminishing as were the numbers of drinkers and smokers.

It was only the fourth night of the Fair. Already the town seemed empty. The crowd of peasants, that, only the night before had packed streets and shops, filling the dark with their deep Norman voices, was gone. All the long day the Rue Argentan had seen the old familiar sight — the long procession of farmers,

of grooms, of jockeys and stud-raisers leading or riding homewards their bought or unsold bargains.

The packing of horses into the freight cars had been one of the shows of this, our last day at Falaise, and now, once more, in the warmth of the soft August night, we were to make the tour of the town.

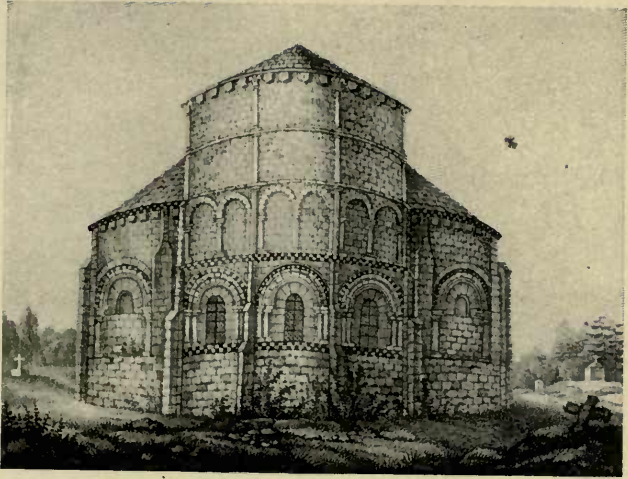
The sidewalks were almost emptied of chairs and tables. The cobble-stones echoed once more to the rustic music of clinking sabots. Through half open shutters one could watch the tired town folks, candle in hand, mounting upwards to their chambers. Lights were out early. The long provincial calm was settling down upon the old town, cradling it into its wonted quiet.

Some late revellers, who had gathered to form a rustic Bacchanalia wound and re-wound, with growing uncertainty of tread, up and down the hilly streets. Their songs, begun lustily, were ending in the disorderliness of feeble discord.

Better than click of sabots or Norman song were the scents, that, from unseen gardens,

cooled and enriched the night winds. Better than tottering shapes of boozy peasants were the dim forms of trees, that towered up from the valley. Better than all was the solemn state of the silent churches guarding the city squares, rising into the night in the glory of their sculptured grace.

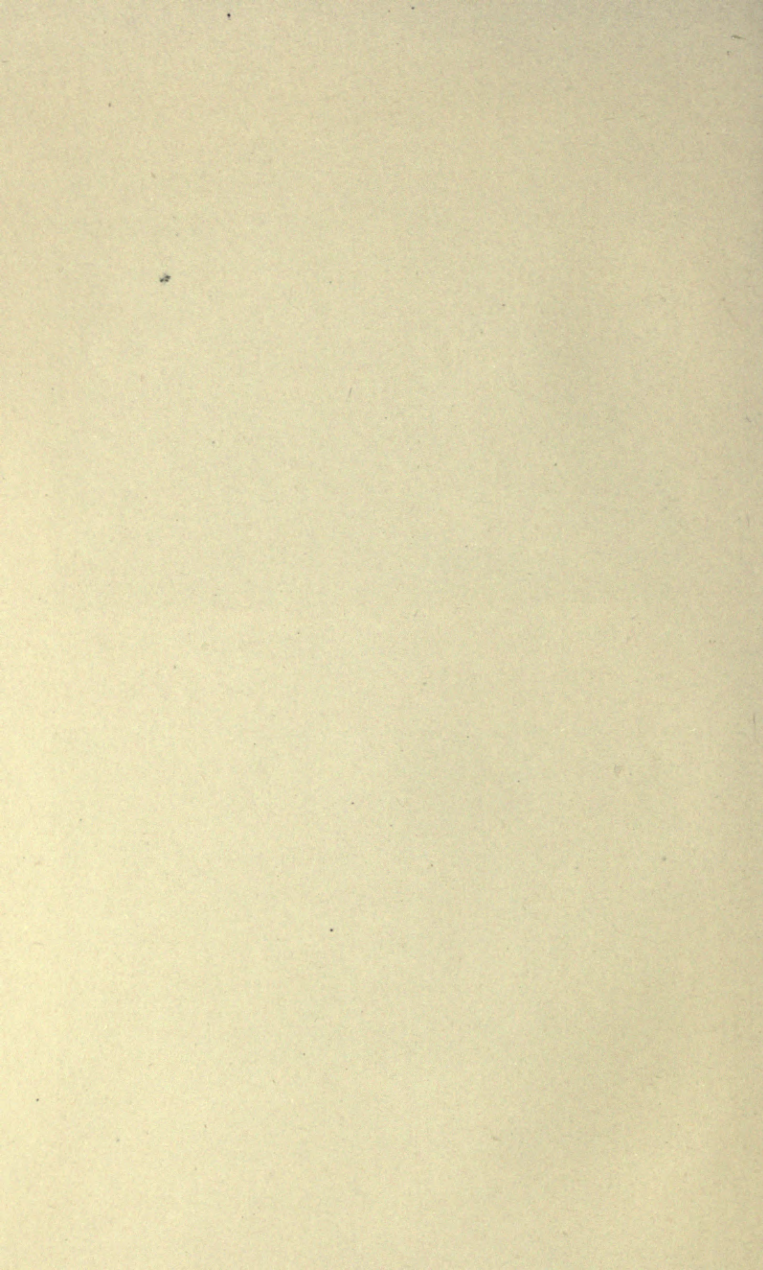
Out of the dark a shadow was born. Small at first, scarcely discernible, little by little it grew to fair and wondrous shape. Dwarfing the town, the dim outlines of the distant forest and the noble St. Gervais tower alone seemed to match it for grandeur. For the shadow was that of the Past — of that great Past when Falaise sat on its cliffs like a queen on her throne and men paid homage to her. This phantom — a luminous shape — followed us, beckoning, advancing, retreating — as illusive as a dream — yet entering with us into the midnight stillness of our inn.



*The Apse of the Norman Church of Notre Dame  
de Guibray.*



*Place Guillaume le Conquérant, Falaise.*



PART II  
THE TALE OF A TOWN





## CHAPTER I

### THE STORY OF ARLETTE

“ A Faleize ont li Dus hanté,  
Une meschine i ont amée  
Arlot ont nom, de burgeois née.”

**D**OWN the narrow twisting streets that climbed the Valdante hillside, there passed daily, and twice and thrice daily, hundreds of years ago, a maiden with a water bucket. When the bucket was empty and light in the hand, the girl swung her grace down the cliff with quick free step. As like as not she would mark the rhythm of her swing with the snatch of a song.

As she went, swinging her way downwards, heads would pop out of low doors and narrow window slits.

“ To the fountain — Arlette ? ”

“ Sz, — to the fountain — ar't coming ? ”

The song that had died in Arlette's throat was then born anew, swollen to a chorus of

girlish chatter and laughter. Belted by the living clasp of her maiden following, Arlette sped onward, all the hamlet's gossip as fresh on her lip as the bright noon.

For all it was late autumn — what a noon it was! If the air was a trifle quick, it but made one's breath come the swifter. Just as in mid-summer, there was a touch of gold everywhere. As one came closer to the river, the air was softer, warmer — how the breeze wound itself about one's throat and neck, twisting around one's naked ankles like a thin wet scarf!

Ah — how good it was to be young, to be alive, and to be going to the fountain!

In all the Valdante there was no place like the fountain for the making of a girl's happiness. This was the excuse of all others for taking a turn in the streets. One could be sure of a chat with Marthe and Lisette. There might come, also, the chance of a "bonjour" to a soldier or farmer, as they passed by the river; and of all maidens Arlette could be counted upon to buy, with that wondrous smile of hers, the latest news of Guibray or Falaise.

In Arlette's own hamlet of La Roche, whose

tightly built streets climbed the hillside, there was no lack of life. Its very soil wore its tanner's colors. Half the village was dyed purple or red — earth, house-fronts, and men's hands and arms whose leathern aprons were the colors of the hides spread out a-drying. Water mills crunched and groaned. Wind mills pawed an air that echoed to a thousand sounds — to the bleating sheep; to the rhythmic clang of the metal workers in the numerous cutlery shops; to the sound of soused linens and cottons as the dyers plunged the stuffs into their deep vats — and to the squeal of pigs and the moans of the steers being led to their slaughter.

Ah, no! there was no lack of stir or life at La Roche — this busiest of all the quarters in the Valdante.

As busy as any was Verpray — Arlette's father, — the tanner of hides. Verpray, just then, was under a cloud. He had been found guilty of a fearful offence. He had been caught poaching. In the great forests yonder where the Count, their Lord, kept his wild beasts, and took his chief pleasure in their killing, Verpray in common with a goodly number of his fellow

tradesmen, had gone hunting. Now the great Count of Falaise in his own forests was one thing; and a miserable lot of tanners, daring to risk their lives in the desire to increase their stock-in-trade — at the Count's expense — was quite another. Ducal forests were not for such as they. These Valdanteans must be taught their lesson. The gallows yonder on the hill were waiting to teach it them.

By the luckiest of chances the most guilty of all the rascals, one Verpray, had been caught red-handed. The Count had gleefully sworn this one, at least, should hang for his crime.

Other Gods, however, were at work in the breezy Valdante than those of pure vengeance.

For Arlette was going to the fountain!

Going also, to so many and such wonderful things besides, that had the vision of her future lain there — for her to read in the clear mirror of her water-pail — a stronger head than that of Arlette's might have been turned at the sight.

What her young eyes did count on seeing, there at the fountain, was already before her. The familiar figures of the tanners, the soldiers

— with an eye across their shoulders for the girl — troop, the farmers' carts rattling by, and yes, surely to-day, at least, were they all in luck, for up yonder in the woods the horns were blowing. The hunt was to pass — this the Valdantean way — up to the château aloft.

That Arlette's heart should leap to her throat as the Count and his hunting escort came sweeping down the steep incline, was little wonder. She should see close — almost face to face — their dreaded yet half-loved Lord, who was to do such fearful things to her father. Was he come even now to take his vengeance? Would he stop — and bid her bring her father? Should she see him — Verpray — bound and torn — perhaps in rude soldier's grasp going up to the dungeons of the fortress?

All the gold in the day was suddenly turned to darkness. Then out of the mist before her eyes there rode the Lord Robert, sitting his horse like a king, with his bird on his wrist.

It was then Arlette looked at the Count. At sight of him a quick sudden strength was upon her. He should see none of the fear that was gnawing her heart. Perhaps, (who knows?)

if the great Count cast his glance upon her, he might read the prayer in her look for her father.

What he read there — what his man's eyes saw, kindled a flame so swift, so sharp, that Robert, Count d'Hièmes, prospective Duke of Normandy, knew his hour had come.

A girlish, graceful shape tapering to slim firm ankles, whose only covering was the snow of a skin that turned to peach bloom on the rounded cheek; an open throat, white and full; eyes lucent with goodness that met his own bravely, valiantly. For a garment one that clothed the maiden better than any court mantle, for she wore a dignity that matched his own.

*Nom di Dieu!* here was a girl in a thousand. Here also was a quick sweet pain, something new, strange, imperious. It was a delirium worker. The Count d'Hièmes found himself riding his horse as limp as any love-sick maiden.

This stage lasted long enough to teach the Lord of Falaise and of the Valdante what he wanted — what he must have! The girl was there! God be thanked she was there in his

own hamlet! Easy enough to pluck that peach, since it grew within his own walls. She was Verpray's — the poacher's daughter? He had heard aright? Ah! well. Verpray's sin, after all, was not so black; there were others who had sinned too, and worse. Verpray's crime must be looked into, — could be condoned, doubtless, must be forgotten. A man with such a daughter was never born to hang from timber.

“ Il la requist affectueusement à son père.”

Thus does the chronicle phrase the Count's first overture. It rings with an accent of truth. There is in it the spirit of that fine nature of the man whose eye-born passion was, even at birth, softened to a certain delicacy by sentiment.

Now Verpray, a tanner in his honest hours, and Doda his wife, they also had their sentiments to make known. Their Count — a coming Duke perchance, love-smitten with their daughter? Ah well, they were scarce surprised. Others besides the Count had marked her fairness; even the Valdante — aye — Falaise too, had eyes. Beauty such as

hers went not abroad unnoticed, and returned not unasked. They — her parents — knew their daughter's worth. Knowing it, they dared tell even their Lord they had other views than that this, their pearl, the treasure of the house, should be worn as a nobleman's bauble one day and trampled in the dust the next. No! no! Arlette was meant for more honorable uses than even a future Duke's "amoureuse." If however, the Count would but propose marriage — even one clandestine — ah well! that was an altogether different matter.

Now of all ways for fanning love's flame into the fury of a conflagration, none has yet been found surer than a masterly wielding of the provocative called opposition. Marry Arlette, even love-sick, heart-and-lip-desiring Robert felt he could not. The prospective heir to the great Duchy of Normandy must not wed a tanner's daughter. Certain other well worn promises, however, might serve. He would only too willingly proffer the common stock-in-trade of wealthy, high-born wooers. The only she-and-never-another-vow might take a certain accent of novelty on noble lips.



Meanwhile, as prayers and protestations worked their way, the Count fed his flame by ways none could stop. If the bitter-sweet ache for the girl must wait on consentment for its soothing, eye and sense could revel in loving contemplation of what was surely soon to be his.

Often as he had looked forth from the high built window of his great fortress, and found the earth fair that lay beneath it, never had he seen lovelier prospect than that of Arlette at the well. Far below him as was that deep pocket in the walls, and small as the girl shape looked—a child she seemed from that height—yet did her shape and the white and pink and gold of her make the blood flood her lover's pulses with quick fresh warmth. *Ay di Dieu!* What a waist for an arm's clasping! What ankles to be covered with kisses first and then later with courtly tunics,—the cyclades of great ladies—that none thereafter might see their whiteness.

And Arlette? Surely there could be no harm in looking up at the Castle. It had ever been her habit to scan the great walls. In days not

yet old, other eyes than those of the Master had looked through arched windows and from turreted walls to throw their fiery glances downwards. And now? Ah well — the lordly shape that leant its strength across the window ledge, to watch her coming, how could she — a girl, Arlette, the tanner's daughter — how could she help the lifting of her eyes to answer back the bolt of love shot down to her?

In these days Arlette went oftener than common to the fountain.

Meanwhile Verpray "*toutefois fut du duc tant prié et requis par la grande affection qu'il vit que le duc avoit à la pucelle sa fille*" so greatly did the Duke (not yet Duke, but Count d'Hièmes) importune Verpray, and so impressed was the latter by the great love and affection of the "Duke" for the maiden his daughter, that Verpray was brought to the point of consenting — provided always "Arlette y mit son consentement."

When Arlette herself was put to the torture question, what answer did she give? For torture question it was. There was all the dowry of her virtue, hope of honest marriage,

children who might not blush to call her mother — here was the price to be paid for — for what? Could she be sure, really sure of the great Lord meaning her well? Ah mi! What a dazzling, soul-disturbing lover he made — that shape against the window! Had he not come down from his splendid castle, again and again, as humble as any poor tanner of the hamlet, to sue and plead and beg? His lips breathed promises as rich as his love seemed hot and urgent.

Beyond even the love and the lover swam, golden-misted, the vision of a grandeur dazzling indeed to a bare-foot girl. How indeed was she to answer?

Listen to the answer, and read in it the nature of that soul that was to mother one of the world's conquerors.

“*Mon père, je suis votre fille et geniture, ordonnez de moi ce ku'il vous plaist. Je suis prete à vous obéir.*”

“*De cette response fut le duc moult joyeux.*”

How you read it, I know not. To me it seems the very pearl of an answer. Her heart was the Count's — her true lover's — already.

Consentment breathes through every line. But, even to and before one's parents, to one's own self as well, above all, to fierce-tongued, gossip-gifted Valdante, one's willingness to the making of such a bargain must wear the outward semblance of decency. She yielded readily, but at the parental command.

The Count understood; he was "moult joyeux."

All had not yet been said, however, by the obedient tanner's daughter. She had come to firmer ground in these weeks of parleying. She had found a prop, one sure, strong, more potent than all others, to stay her girl-strength; she knew now all she might dare.

In those dim days, as in our brighter so-called wise ones, women took their troubles to a priest. Arlette's family boasted something wiser even than the parish priest. A hermit-uncle nursed his soul and starved his mortal parts in the neighboring Falaisian woods. To him Arlette took her torn mind that he might mend it. The hermit — did he have his help from heaven, or, did he, forgetting his vows, remember he too had once been a man?

From whatever the source, his spiritual lips breathed a strange earthly wisdom. "Let the girl go up to her noble lover." Whether what happened next was of his ordering, no chronicler will say. But once the hermit-uncle had been seen a new and quite womanly power grows upon Arlette.

Yes, she would be the Count's "Amie;" she would go up to him, even as he wished, though she went with all her heart in her mouth. She would stay with him, in his high-perched castle, there to be his love. But for this her undoing, she must go, attended by the state that should be hers, were she indeed to be the noble Count's true wife. Otherwise she would not go.

The man in the lover's soul consented. But the Lord of Falaise was a Norman. Yes; the girl should have her escort; on the night following, he would send a guard and she was to be brought to him at the castle secret door—the "poterne."

"The secret door?" cried the voice from La Roche! "Never, in God's world!" She, Arlette, had named, as the sole price of her love a wife's escort. A wife's escort she would have, or none at all.

Here indeed was a new and strange stop. But Robert was a man of wit; he had an eye for the humor of a situation. Also, presumably, such pride and firmness of mind in a tanner's daughter, must have plunged Robert, the lover, twenty fathoms the deeper in his sea of longing for her.

She should have her courtly escort. He would send the girl his own guard; his "chevaliers" should bring her up from the low cottage door at La Roche to the château where his heart was preparing a welcome more splendid than the state she would find awaiting her.

His heart's beating, however, still must wait on a maiden's obstinacy.

For Robert's knights had been sent on foot, dismounted. The guard was no guard at all.

Back to the giant fortress marched the troop of noblemen. Warriors ripe in years, youthful knights, heroes of the tournament, and mighty hunters of the forest, all were sent trapesing back. "Bring your steeds" was the tanner's daughter's word of command.

Can you fancy the laughter, deep-chested or

treble-pitched? The oaths that must perforce have ended in gay jesting? What jokes must have leapt to lip, what wit have flashed, as knights and warriors re-wound their way across the steeps, meekly to seek their chargers for the getting of Verpray's daughter.

And the Valdante! And Falaise! And Guibray! What of the neighbors, the tanners, the cutlers, the dyers? What of the women's heads thick as strung berries, hanging from all the windows, and every gossip at her post on the door-step? Was ever such a sight seen as this, the great knights running to and fro at Arlette's — Arlette's of all maidens — bidding? Such goings on were beyond even a witch's prophecy!

Now let the tanner's yards and cutler's doors and all the windows thicken with faces, for 'tis the last these neighbors of hers will ever see of Arlette — as Arlette!

There she was, at last! *Nom di Dieu*, — but how grand she was grown, already! She rode her horse like a queen. As a queen's was her pomp and state. Her troop was about her now, brave in color, their short mantles

showing their crimson and blues. Nobly mounted, the Count's chevaliers were indeed guarding Arlette — Arlette, the tanner's daughter.

At high noon, in the pale harmonizing autumnal sun, she and her soldiers made the full circuit of Falaise. Through its streets packed close with low houses; through the mud, the mire, and rain-soaked straw, and through the aisles of the muttering, murmuring crowds of her fellow townspeople, Arlette rode grandly to her undoing.

At the château, "the great doors of the town's gateway must be opened for her, and the draw-bridge lowered."

Thus it was that Arlette gave herself to her lover.



## CHAPTER II

### ROBERT THE MAGNIFICENT

“Tôt fut la porte défermée  
Et tot eissi l’ont ens menée  
Deciqu’en la chambre (voutice)  
Ou ont maint ymaige peintice  
A or, vermeil et à colors.”

**T**HE narrow room, built into the fortress walls, where Robert’s chevaliers led Arlette, no longer glows with the “many painted images in gold and enamel,” that must have dazzled the girl’s eyes as greatly as did the face of her lover.

The walls of the famous little chamber are now of rough plaster. Beneath the low vaulted ceiling there are still left the narrow alcove, large enough for the primitive eleventh-century bed, and the wide chimney mouth where a whole forest, doubtless, of noble timber has furnished light and warmth for generations of men.

The splendor of appointments in that small closet in a fortress wall was of the semi-barbaric order of luxury of a rude age. Already, before he was come to his ducal seat, both his soldiers and his subject people had named Robert. His liberality and his love of lavish expenditure had won for him the title of "Magnificent." To his Northman's spirit of adventure and his impetuous ardor he united the Roman's delight in sumptuous surroundings. This chamber that glowed with color; the strange-faced archaic images lit into splendor by flaming torches; the arras hanging at alcove and door, thick with shadowy figure shapes; the skins that lay upon the couches and the gleams of the pale Merovingian gold encircling the rough-cut jewels on mantle clasp and necklace — thus, both in his person and in his fortress home, Robert presented a semi-Oriental love of the splendid.

Robert's career, as lover, warrior, knight and huntsman, and later as Duke and Pilgrim, are the more easily conceivable to the nineteenth-century mind, when viewed from this gentleman's bed-chamber.

For gentleman, Robert Count d'Hièmes and later sixth Duke of Normandy, unquestionably was. His life proved his right to the title. This is no light praise for a Duke and a Norman of his time. The trace of "Pirate" in his Northman's blood was almost lost. There was enough left of the old Scandinavian love of adventure to make Robert as picturesque a figure as he was gallant and brave. In this Portrait of a Gentleman there are no effete Chesterfieldian traits to mar the noble Rembrandtish breadth and glow. One feels one's self to be in the presence of a man.

He strides across the pages of history with the sure live tread of a strong personality. At the outset Robert presents himself with the carriage and outlines of the man of action, rather than of one who drifts to his place.

As the non-reigning member of his House, an obscure Count d'Hièmes, Robert found the territory assigned to him too small for the stage of his activities. In Falaise, close by his domain, a hill-town with a cliff fortress, he saw a town and donjon exactly to his liking. Falaise at the time was not considered as rank-

ing especially high among the towns in Norman land. Coutances, Avranches, Bayeux, Lisieux, and of course, Rouen the capital, these and others were esteemed as far more valuable "strong places."

Robert's keen eye had seen, however, one great military advantage in the seizure of Falaise. That fortress on its cliffs was the key to the open plains that led to the sea. Whoever held the key could hold fast the treasure-house of lower Normandy. As huntsman, this Nimrod among Normans, also, had looked upon the vast forests engirdling Falaise, and found them to be the very forests of his desires. For beasts and birds, for every creature that was wildest, freest, fleetest, these forests were famed.

Now it chanced that both the coveted hill-sides and the populous forests belonged to Robert's brother William, who, as reigning Duke of Normandy, was also Robert's over-Lord. Robert, however, was not a Norman for nothing. These Northmen had kept true to the adventurer's disdainful habit of laughing at fetters.

The question of the ownership of Falaise was one to be proved — not by right — but by might. This latter was that higher law of acquisition which was as potent in feudal Normandy as it is in our own days.

Robert being a soldier, and no subtle capitalist or financier, having decided to own Falaise, proceeded to make the place exceedingly tight.

Vague as is the history of the beginnings of the cliff fortress, its earlier historians point to Charlemagne as its first restorer. Later when the "Pirate Dukes" had made the valuable discovery that the land that owned the most fortresses and walled towns could dictate terms to all the rest of France, the third of the Norman Dukes, Richard-the-Fearless, greatly improved and enlarged the Donjon of Falaise, its walls and enclosed places.

Sixty years later, when Robert's clever and covetous gaze fell upon Falaise, the place might have tempted even a less reckless and audacious spirit. The fortress walls stretched their heights above the moats that lay below in the deep valleys of the plain on one side, and

the Valdante cleft on the other. Watch-towers showed their square teeth above the clear cliff heights. There were stately gateways, with ponderous drawbridge and portcullis. The space within the fortress walls was large enough for military manœuvres, for the changing of the guard, or for use as a training place for the Norman youth in the difficult art of chivalry.

Then as now, town and fortress sat upon their green cliff with a fairy unlikeness to their life and purpose. More like unto the vision of walls and a city seen in a dream, must feudal Falaise have shone to Robert's eyes even as now it shines in its glitter of high perched roof tiles and noble wall fronts to our sober gaze. That "Spirit of Places" which the poet-essayist would have us find in all the lovelier, nobler sites where men have lived, toiled, fought, and loved, lives on here at Falaise. A bright-winged shape, its "spirit" of romance, of adventure, of large prosperity and high destiny floats upwards from the green vales to the glittering cliff summits. The charm of Falaise is as compelling for us as

it was for longing Robert. Its charm once seen and felt was, and is, irresistible. It had and has a feminine perdurability of fascination, capturing eye and sense with its gracious hill shapes, its tender slopes, its verdant valley breadth, and ceaseless play of change and contrast.

Robert proved his love for the beautiful cliff town in true gallant fashion. He was willing to fight for its possession. He was even willing to sacrifice a mere brother. The brother, it is true, was at a pleasing geographical distance when Robert's subjugation by Falaise was first strong upon him. William, the Duke, was most conveniently away from that part of lower Normandy, on some business of governing. The first investiture of Falaise was therefore made the easier for the Count d'Hièmes.

The marching of an army a few hundred leagues southward was, however, as easy a feat in those fighting days for William, as Robert had found it to settle himself in a castle which did not happen to belong to him.

It was no brother, it was William, reigning

Duke of Normandy who knocked at the fortress door for admission into his own castle. The knock was no gentle one. At first Robert was disposed to keep him at the idle business of knocking. The masterful way in which the war machinery of that day was handled by William's soldiers, however, soon gave Robert some hours of uneasiness. Strong as were his walls, Robert already saw them all but entered, — before a sudden thought struck him.

After all, why fight one's own brother, when the brother happens to have so peculiarly skilful an army? How much better to be magnanimous — and hold out the hand of forgiveness? One is not surnamed the "Magnificent" for nothing.

William, on his part, showed as noble a spirit. A reconciliation took place. The brothers separated all the closer friends because of the recent unpleasantness. The blood that is thicker than water went to the signing of the pact.

For the short month after, Robert's and the town's history was that of happy lovers and nations. In the neighboring forests of Gouf-



fern and of Eraines, Robert was content to spend his days. Fatherhood followed swift on the joys of his happy love-life with Arlette. But before he was father, William, his brother, the Duke died, to the usual accompanying suspicion of poison, this latter being the mediæval explanation of all sudden deaths.

With Robert's seven years of active reign as Duke, we have no present concern. The pages of history are full of his chivalrous actions, such as helping his King keep his own throne; of his somewhat less definite plan for a capture of England than that of his greater son, under pretence of restoring his nephews to their English throne,—one which the wind and waves decided was to end in failure, his fleet being wrecked; also of his aid to the Count of Flanders, and of his wars against Brittany.

Altogether Robert's seven years of reign were busy ones.

His son was thus set an example in the paths of adventure, and of the daring which is two thirds of the art of conquering. "To have is to hold;" that was the lesson of the capture of Falaise. Robert's other wars were admoni-

tory of the fact that he who only minds his own business will lose an opportunity, perchance, of getting a valuable slice of his neighbor's.

Robert, meanwhile, did not forget Falaise. In Falaise there was at least the one, possibly there were the two, whom he loved best in the world. His "little bastard" was being brought up in that healthful hill town. Whether or not Arlette remained with her child, historians, on this unimportant point, are provokingly silent. They all agree, however, as to one fact. Arlette kept Robert her true lover. She bound him fast through all the years of his life.

Constancy, when love is domesticated to the daily need, is best preserved not by absence, but by the living presence. Arlette, therefore, must have been as often within Rouen's walls as in her own Falaisian ones.

One of the chief services Robert's restless energies bequeathed to Falaise was his starting the Fair that was subsequently known as the Fair of Guibray.

Robert was as quick as an American to act on

a new idea. Seeing that a certain miraculous discovery of a statue of the Virgin was attracting large crowds first of the devout, then of image vendors, and finally of merchants of all sorts, it occurred to the Duke to turn this accidental gathering into the lucrative form of a yearly Fair. The first Fair was held beneath the walls of Robert's own stronghold. There, where the roads of Caen and Tours and Brittany met, came the merchants, horse traders, and petty vendors.

Robert's inestimable services to Falaise did not stop with this inauguration of her long period of wealth and prosperity. He was also the founder of several public fountains in the city of his love.

In our own luxurious time, to "found" a fountain would be as archaic an act as to rebuild a feudal fortress. Consider the originality proved by a prince in a semi-barbaric period of such a public-spirited action! Robert also, doubtless, cherished a certain excusable weakness for fountains. Had he not found Arlette at one?

The chroniclers, having stumbled upon this

*rara avis* of a prince who could do useful things royally, continue to discover other acts as remarkable. Robert is said to have established the first hospital in Falaise. Certain historians are also to be found still quarrelling over this latter achievement. I, for one, cannot see why the starting of a hospital, on an early primitive scale should have been any more impossible or unlikely than a giving of the sumptuous and elaborate banquets, so much in vogue at Rouen during that culminating period of Normandy's importance.

With all this generous gift of his time, his energies, his armies and his treasure, there was a darker side to Robert's character. As in his gifts and feasts he was "magnificent," his people, when he was but a Count, had found him possessing traits not quite as lordly. He was known to them, early in his youth as "Robert-the-Devil." Yet Robert, as history paints him, shows no trace of any specially devilish attributes save in a quickness of temper and certain dark promises of evil in youth, which his later manhood failed to confirm.

In two notable instances, however, Robert

showed that the "devil" of an obdurate obstinacy was inrooted in him.

Deeply as he loved Arlette, he never married her. A father, if ever there was one, thrilling to every obligation a passionate paternity had developed, yet he left his son a bastard.

That Arlette must have longed and pled for the place, when loved and honored as mistress, and mother of a noble son, that her lord had denied to her when but an ignorant and unknown girl, who can doubt? Besides all the potent reasons for making her a lawful wife, Arlette could point to not one, but two, precedents for such an act of restitution in her Robert's immediate family. The first and greatest of the Norman Dukes, Rollo himself, when his princesse Gisella, the King's daughter, died, had he not taken to wife "la belle Popée"? Years before, he had carried her off before the eyes of her father, the Count of Bayeux. Having had her as his "Amoureuse;" holding her dear as the mother of his children yet he had heartlessly repudiated her when he married Gisella. But had he not

when widowed, retaken Popée by the hand and married her, before the great church doors? If Robert, remembering his princely blood, had then urged in reply that Popée at least was a Comte's daughter, Arlette must have had an answer ready to her need. For Richard the Fearless — fearless indeed he was — had married Gonor, sister-in-law of a humble forest-guard — also "en face de l'église" — thus legitimatizing Robert's own grandsire!

Now when any such little family discussions came up, Arlette must have made it particularly unpleasant for Robert, I take it. That her arguments were of no avail, proves anew that while for many a devil there are ways and tricks of exorcisement not wholly vain, for the plague of obstinacy there is no cure save death.

The cure came about, in Robert's case, from his second recorded act of stubborn determination.

Whether it was that his quick blood wearied within him, because there were no more Kings, or Counts, or nephews to right, or vassals to fight and conquer, or whether the charms of Arlette were waning (there are all sorts of

reasons for a man's thinking about his soul), Robert announced his intention of starting for the Holy Land. In Robert's case to intend was to do.

At the most critical of all periods for his state, as well as for the future of his acknowledged heir, in the teeth of all the protesting eloquence of his counsellors, did Robert in the seventh year of his reign proceed to set out on the fashionable penitential journey of his day.

Neither Arlette's prayers, nor the protests of his subjects, nor even a son's future hung in the balance of that "kind of satisfaction which those who wished to do penance" then imposed upon themselves — as Langevin, the priest-historian, phrases Robert's mistaken enterprise.

Being a man with a high sense of duty, Robert proceeded to put his affairs in order. Before laying aside the mace and taking up the cross, he assembled his vassals, presenting to them the boy William as their future Sovereign; for the journey to Jerusalem in those days was one to be undertaken with the almost sure certainty of death meeting one along the route.

Later, Robert also took the young "bastard" to Paris, where Henri I the King, received the youth, and promised to superintend his education. Having selected Alain, Duke of Brittany, to govern Normandy in his absence, Robert the Penitent took leave of his Duchy and Arlette and set out upon his long journey.

As all his life long this vehement nature had never done anything by halves, "Robert the Magnificent" even as pilgrim, was magnificent still. The tales of his adventures along the later well-worn Crusader's roads read, in the chronicles of the time, like the acts of a fairy prince in disguise. Gifts and benefits he flung about with the heedless hand of the generous. As pilgrim, however, as extravagantly did he court humiliation. Seeing but a bare-footed pauper in the humble garb of a passing pilgrim, a certain gate-keeper sent the Duke reeling from the force of a blow given to quicken his pace. The troop of Norman gentlemen about him were for summarily punishing the insolent guard.

"Don't touch him," cried the Duke. "It is but reasonable and just that men should suffer



for the love of God. I love the blow he gave me better than my city of Rouen."

When he fell ill in the country of the Saracens, "au pays de Sarrasins," and was forced to take to his litter, his wit was as nimble as when he had seen a humorous vengeance in forcing a recalcitrant vassal to do him homage with a saddle on his back. Four and four, his sixteen Saracens carried him by turn. A certain Norman, returning from the Holy Land, as he made his salutations, asked of the Duke what message he could carry back to his people.

"Thou canst tell my people and my friends," said the Duke — one seems to hear the strong Norman laughter through the words, — "that thou mettest me thus, and here, where four devils were carrying me to Paradise."

Before he went to Paradise, he knelt at the sacred sepulchre. The splendor of his offerings was a nine days' wonder. On the return journey, however, after drinking some foul water at Niceæ, he died.

On the brow of a boy of seven the ducal crown of Normandy then rested.

## CHAPTER III

### THE YOUNG DUKE WILLIAM AT FALAISE

“**I** HAVE a little Bastard,” Robert had cried grandly to his Barons, whom he had summoned about him at Rouen, for the express purpose of making the above announcement, “who will grow up, if God so wills it, of whose prudence and valor I hope much. I have no doubt whatsoever that he is of my begetting, therefore I pray you receive him as your Lord, and from henceforth I present him to you of the Duchy as my heir.”

To swear allegiance to a child of seven and a bastard, might well have seemed an act of folly even to men whose sense of humor was but rudimentally developed, or Feudalism would never have had a chance of moulding modern society. As it fell out, bastard though William was, there was no one among his relations who was any better off in the matter of legitimacy. His immediate

cousins were either churchmen, or women, or of birth as tainted as his own. The Barons, therefore, acclaimed the child Duke. William, looking twice his age, and with a something in his look and carriage which bore out his father's boast of the quality in him, then began the long fifty-two years of his troubled but triumphant reign.

The twelve years following his father's death and his own accession were spent in going to school. As one of his more famous historians tersely remarks, his schooling was a stern one. At an age when a modern boy's most serious occupation is an innocuous thievery of birds' nests, or a playing at the knavery of desperado, William was in training for his Knighthood. At twelve he had already lived the life of a page and courtier at Paris and Rouen; at barely thirteen he proved himself soldier with the makings in him of a general, leading a brilliant assault upon his own Castle of Falaise.

There are certain towns, like some women, who carry with them the magic of a good influence. Falaise was such an influence in the

great Duke's early life. His real childhood was passed there. On the grassy fortress ramparts, he was trained to his first knowledge and skill in the use of arms in whose wielding he was to show, later, such prowess. Falaise also, gave William his first chance of proving to his Barons and his Duchy that that which had been given to him he meant to keep. It was at Falaise that, with his first victory, even as boy, he showed that while he could be merciful in the hour of victory, he could use victory and meant so to do, to wipe the hated stain from off his name. He righted his mother there.

If down in the Valdante Robert had found the rapture of that illicit love that was to darken his greater son's career, William, in his turn, found in his great fortress uplifted, well-nigh impregnable, an arm of power which, even as a child, he knew how to use.

There could never have been a time when the possession of so noble a structure as was the Château of Falaise could have failed to have had its effect on so impressionable a nature as William's. If the finger of scorn

could be pointed at his mother, Arlette, as she sat in the house near the square, a house long known as "Le Manoir de Guillaume," where William's own earliest childhood was presumably spent, how the fiery glow of pride must have burned in the boy's soul, when he thought of the great fortress that was his. Fierce resolves of vengeance, hot vows of valorous deeds to be done, must the possession of such a stronghold have bred in the boy's breast. How these vows were kept the maimed citizens of Alençon could have told you.

The Falaise of the eleventh century presented a very different aspect to the young impressionable eye of the boy-Duke than it does to-day to our delighted gaze.

The Falaise that William lived in was a town of scattered groups of houses, built mostly of wood; mean and low dwellings they would seem to us, with their more or less filthy interiors. These poorer dwellings were interspersed with the larger, more commodious houses — "manoirs" of nobles and the well-to-do; for Falaise, from its earliest days, appears to have been the resort of Norman nobility, rather

than of merchants. These houses lined the larger streets that were not much wider than a man's mantle. The narrow streets were beclouded with dust in summer; and in wet or winter weather, they were a bog of mud and mire. These streets, mean as they were, formed, nevertheless, an important eleventh-century town. As such it was one to be fortified and protected. Great walls stretched about the long nave-like height on which Falaise was built. The gates of the town were not as numerous in William's day as they were later, when six noble gates, some of which with their towers and turrets were each a fortress in themselves, with their stores and garrisons, made the fortifications of Falaise a terror to France for long centuries.

Of the churches we now study so admirably in Falaise, not one, as now built, was standing in William's time. In the market square, on the site of St. Gervais, there stood, in his time a chapel, known as *La Chapelle Ducale*.

When he began to feel the building mania of his age possess him the chapel was torn down,

and the Norman structure of St. Gervais was begun.

In the square close to the gates of the fortress, known as "La Place Guillaume," in this square the older church of St. Trinité stood, where William was baptized.

The heart and soul of eleventh-century Falaise were not, however, in its wall-begirt town, in its market squares, or in its churches. Its true life throbbed within its fortress walls.

As in the gymnasia of the Greeks all that was best of social or military life was to be seen and met, so a great feudal fortress such as that of Falaise, was the centre, not only of Falaise itself, but of the surrounding country.

In times of peace, the fortress was the rallying point, the natural meeting place for all the huntsmen and friendly nobles of its immediate neighborhood.

In those days of a fighting life there were but two occupations for the well-born,—war and the chase. When neither beseiging nor being beseiged, the nobles took to flying their falcons, or

to a slaying of the boar or other wild beasts. As Robert had found, the forests of Gouffern and Eraines were matchless in the quantity and variety of beasts and birds to be killed.

The hunts organized from the château, therefore, offered unparalleled advantages to the surrounding nobility.

While the almost trackless forests resounded to the ring of the horn, on the sunny ramparts of the fortress the clash of steel, the tramp of horses' hoofs, and shock of mimic contest rose up day after day. For if the forests surrounding Falaise were unrivalled from a sportsman's point of view, the great fortress terraces or plains were equally famous as offering an ideal training ground for the Norman youth. This training in the various arts of chivalry began at an early age. The blows that were to tell so powerfully in the battle of Val-ès-Dunes;—that masterly handling of the mace that won William his way to the Senlac heights on the greatest of all days for a Norman, were first given with



feebleness, but skilful touch, on the Falaisian ramparts, by the child William.

Here also, William formed those lasting friendships with the young nobles of the neighborhood, friendships which were to tell so powerfully at Mantes, at Alençon, and at Hastings. From his earliest days his Falaisians were true to him. They followed him at his first boy's siege of his fortress; they were about him at Val-ès-Dunes, at Alençon, at Varaville, at Domfront, and at Mantes.

When they followed him across the seas to England, William rewarded them as a conqueror should; he divided among them, with lavish hand, the English lands they had helped him to win.

Although a Duke's son and heir, William, during his childhood was known to his subjects of Falaise, as a Lord was rarely known.

For there was the house near the square where his mother sat. This house — "Le Manoir de Guillaume," as it was called — stood on the Rue Campferme close to the immemori-

ally old square. Besides his mother, after his father had gone on his penitent's pilgrimage, the figure of William's plebeian grandfather must also have been a familiar one in and about the house. Robert, when he turned pilgrim, had no further use for a valet; the simplicity of the pilgrim's garb precluded the possibility of valeting being a necessity. Verpray being, therefore, to put it somewhat forcibly, both out of place and an occupation, must inevitably have drifted back to his old haunts. For habit is strong. Even after a rise in the world to be a Duke's valet—to which place his son-in-law had unwisely raised him—even after one has had to do with rich mantles, has handled ducal crowns and jewelled clasps, one's fingers still may itch, I say, for coarse tough hides, and one may pant for the smell of such in a cleft where a tiny river runs.

With a grandfather whose highest position had been that of valet and whose chosen haunts were, presumably, the tanner's quarters; and with a mother who, however dear and tender, must still be held as one apart, there

was indeed no chance for William to forget his bastardy, or for his youthful comrades to feel that impassable distance otherwise rendered inevitable by virtue of the lad's high rank.

## CHAPTER IV

### WILLIAM'S CAPTURE OF FALAISE

WILLIAM'S first appearance in the character of warrior was one to stir the blood. Its appeal to the imagination is still a potent one. The situation was instinct with those elements of romance which make an historic performance occasionally as thrilling and complete, in dramatic incident and *mise-en-scène*, as the setting of a Shakespearian play or of a Dumas novel.

Not a single detail or trick of circumstance so dear to the writer of romantic tragedy was wanting. There were even one or two points which might not have been ventured upon, by even the "King of Romantics," so wildly impossible were they.

There, well up in the foreground, so to speak, was the Château of Falaise, as ideal a feudal fortress as one could conceive. The finest creative instinct could not have imagined one better

placed, with due regard to splendor of situation and appointment, one uniting, more pictorially, grim strength and a lyrical background.

Within the stern fortress frame were just the right characters — those dearest to the heart of the dramatist and to our own; for in these tamer, more conventional days, what morsel so delectable to the palate of the imagination as a black-hearted traitor?

Treachery was as common in these grand old fighting eleventh-century days as it is in our own time when we call it by less unpopular names.

If ever a King was bound by the commonest ties of decency, gratitude, and honor to a youthful heir, Henry, King of the French, in the years of William's minority was to the said William. But Henry could conveniently forget his debt to Robert; forget his vow to cherish and protect his son; forget, in a word he was both King and Christian in his entirely natural human desire to possess Normandy. For Henry was French. The Normans were still the Northmen. After more than a hundred years of occupancy all France agreed that to win back a valuable seaboard, to retake and

to remake Rouen a French city, to abase Norman power and Norman ambition were acts worthy a French King's ambition. Where were the treaties, promises, or vows that could stand against such patriotic projects? Henry, therefore, grasped the first opportunity offered to have his hand in the game of dismembering the formidable Duchy. The opportunity that presented itself must have seemed one heaven-worked.

Toustain—or Thurstain, as Englishmen call the canny son of a canny Danish father, was the instrument chosen by God — if you looked at the situation from the Parisian standpoint, instead of from Rouen's point of view. Toustan, as Vicomte of Hièmes, was governor — “maître” of the Falaisian stronghold.

Henry, backed by the large party of disaffected Norman nobles — who, on principle, were for any heir rather than the rightful one, and also by the strength of French feeling, had begun to lay waste a Duchy which he short-sightedly believed might, possibly, one day be his. There was an earlier quarrel about a certain fortress at Tillières which need not be

entered into here. In this previous affair Henry already had shown how untrustworthy a King's oath might be.

When Kings lead the way in the broad road of dishonor, why should lesser men hesitate?

Toustain, who should have marched out, to give Henry a reminder that he was on William's territory, when the French King was devastating Exmès or Hiesmois, did nothing of the sort. Instead, he paid his King the flattering tribute of imitation. He, too, turned traitor. While Henry was gaily devastating Hiesmois, Toustain, on his part, proposed a bit of rascality entirely in keeping, it appears, with the spirit of the age. He suggested to Henry that he (Toustain) should surrender Falaise and its fortress in return for the rich country of Hiesmois of which he himself was Vicomte. Henry leapt at the suggestion. He even sent a French garrison to help swell Toustain's troops, in fear lest the fortress should have to fight the faithful Normans still left.

The fortress, with this possibility before it, took its precautionary measures. Its stores of

provisions were increased, and the French garrison was hurried in. Soon, from the château's ramparts and terraces were sent echoing down the valleys the sounds men love best. From the ramparts came the tramp of armed men; from the towers and turrets of the great gates came the ring of steel and the chorus of soldiers' voices.

Below, the wide moats reflected the image of the fortress above, armed to its teeth,—awaiting attack.

And in the valleys of the Valdante, in faithful, indignant Falaise, men shivered and shuddered, and wondered what sign from Heaven would come to announce a deliverer.

This part of the scene, I think you will concede, was fairly well set.

But the best is to come. It is not in the first, but in the second act of this moving drama, we are to get the very heart of action.

From across the abyss of nearly ten centuries of time, the ear seems still to catch the sounds of a dashing headlong ride. Out from Rouen, from a ducal palace, down the Seine, across it, swifter and swifter swept the flying



figure of the boy-Duke. By his side, with as eager a bound, rode his tutor-governor — Raoul de Gacé. Now this Ralph, like all the more energetic men of his time, had one or two purple patches on his soul. On his inner, secret list of what might be termed the strictly professional acts of a Norman nobleman of his time, he had a murder or two. Murderer though he had been, yet, as guardian, so peculiar was the code of personal honor in those days, this Ralph was rather of the ideal type. His boy-Duke was his Duke — he would fight for him to the death.

Thus the two rode, of one mind, one sure and deadly purpose theirs. As they rode, they gathered their army about them. “Cels d’Auge et cels de Cingalais” (“those of the country of Auge and those of Cingalais,” Wace tells us,) joined themselves to William. As he neared Falaise, his troops, like those Achilles had brought to life by a mere stamping of his heel, seemed to spring out of the very earth. His Falaisians were to find their deliverers in their own nobles, led by their own native-born child-Duke.

One can imagine the outburst of enthusiasm at the sight of this boy leader of twelve, heading his Normans, marching through the streets of his town, to re-capture his own—his father's chief fortress. Child though he was, he is said to have looked and played his man's part, with the better verisimilitude in that he looked twice his age. In figure he was tall. Already his bearing was that of a young conqueror. His eyes were noticeable for their eagle-like size and the directness of their gaze. His power and skill in the use of weapons marked him as among the most doughty lads of the kingdom. On that first of his leading of his nobles to battle, those who had played and trained with him on the very ramparts they were now to re-capture must have remarked exultingly that the plains of Falaise had done their work well.

William attacked his fortress from the Falaisian, the town side. He stormed the city gate—*Porte-du-Château*, and the walls about it. In an incredibly short space of time a breach was made. Before the boy's army had time to enter the path they had made for themselves,

Toustain came to his senses. Frightened at so surprisingly swift a transformation of his boy over-Lord into a general, and one, too, commanding such an exceeding multitude of brave men, he ignominiously begged for quarter and for permission to retire from the country.

Both these favors were granted him. Once in possession of the fortress he loved, William's natural magnanimity, a magnanimity which was to distinguish him all the rest of his life — save when stung to cruelty by insult — made him facile in moments of victory.

Toustain the traitor, therefore, went unharmed down through the fortress gates, gloom and hate his following shades. Meanwhile, on the bright Falaisian cliffs, the air was pure and sweet once more. A boy with radiant face, his youthful senses still heady with the sense of conquest, re-visited every inch of his re-conquered fortress. Followed by the shouting, exultant troops, by his nobles, now won to their child-Duke by clasps of steel, (for had they not found in this child-form a general and a Duke after their own heart?) William passed in review the scenes of his real childhood. Across

the rampart plains where he was first taught to play the man's part; across the airy, leaf-domed valleys to the rocks and gorges he had climbed; across, also, to the forests where, in following the hunt, he had gotten his soldier's and huntsman's seat—all this land beneath and about him, was his very own.

From out of every Norman-arched window; from the guard's hall up from the château terraces; from all the valleys of Mont Mirat—what heads upon heads of soldiers, nobles, and lovely women! What shouts and acclamations must have risen skyward! For this child of Falaise, the child of sin—yes, of shame—was now the Deliverer, the Saviour. Bright as carven marble shone the figure of the young hero on the cliff.

Here, also, let it be noted, this youthful figure, once having leapt to take his place in the drama of his time, at a single bound, as it were, holds it forthwith to the very end. From the moment of that headlong ride from Rouen, to the day when, across burning Mantes his horse stumbled and gave the Conqueror the blow that killed him, William holds the high historic place of the foremost man of his time.

The use William made of his first-won power was significant of the whole character of the man who, after Charlemagne and Rollo his grandsire, was to give to Normandy its early shapely moulding in the ways of law and order.

His next act, following this, his first victory, was of the right heroic stamp. It is ever the office of the hero, in all proper drama, to reward virtue and to right the wronged. Perceiving there was something out of ethical gear in his own family, William proceeded at once to do what was expected of him.

As grandly and with as serene a calm as if awarding captured lands and booty had been his whole childish occupation, William immediately proceeded to give a part of Toustain's lands as a marriage gift to his mother. For his mother needed, in this her son's hour of triumph, but one thing, but that she needed badly. William and his governor de Gacé proceeded to fill her want. A mother, and yet no wife, there was nothing Arlette stood in so great a need of as marriage lines.

When ladies are sufficiently highly placed, there are as a rule men — and brave men —

who find ladies in Arlette's sad plight, doubly rich in charms. To so fair a coin, they are more than willing to give the official sanction of their own reign. Among Toustain's train of nobles was a brave warrior, one Herlevin of Conteville.

He was, therefore, a Falaisian neighbor. Him did William choose as lawful husband of his still lovely mother.

Arlette, therefore, found her second entrance upon the historic stage as dramatically set as was the first. It was from the great fortress of Falaise that love came to lift her from obscurity to greatness. Once more, destiny, as if touched with a divine compassion, meted out to her a golden justice through the portals of the same great structure. There where she had obediently given herself up to her ducal lover, fulfilling the double duty of daughter and mother, fate had sent her that crown of womanhood — a true and lawful husband by the hand of her bastard, though noble offspring.

In other places besides the fortress, therefore, were feasts spread, did minstrels sing, and was there pomp of trailing cyclades and jewelled splendors.

William, in thus assuming the rôle of a merciful destiny, thought doubtless, he might avert its blows from descending in his own direction. He could never have remembered the time when from his babyhood upwards, this blot upon his birth had not darkened his life. Twin-born with his earliest impressions of the life-whirl about him, of his own half-accepted—more or less roughly disputed claim to power and pre-eminence—was this darkening shadow across his childish vision. The shadow was there where he had played on the fortress ramparts with the boy-nobles who, boy-fashion, would not fear to taunt him with a fact boys love to handle as their deadliest weapon of insult. The shadow rested upon him when he had stood in the presence of all his father's court, and great and mighty nobles had knelt in homage and had kissed his child's hands; it had gone up with him to Paris, to the King's Court, where, prospective Duke as he was, he was duly made to feel he was not as other children were, whose mothers could be as comfortably mentioned as the King's own wife—the Queen; and all through his earlier Rouen-

nais reign, the same shadow had seemed to grow with his growth. He could gauge its direful significance and its power of making things harder and harder for him from the ever-recurring talk in council of rebellious nobles and rumors of the King's war upon his Duchy.

For one glorious moment at the fortress the shadow had seemed to be lifted. With that first deep indrawn breath of triumphant victory as boy, William learned the intoxicating secret that power could make men afraid. Before the flash of a sword-blade, the lips that were framing "Bastard" instead would shout out "Conqueror."

Had he never been "Bastard" who knows whether as "Conqueror" William might also have been great? The forces that mould most lives are sufficiently complex. If ever a life proved its source of impulse, the initiative of its fixed determination to secure a Power, a Place to which all must yield and bow, the life of William of Normandy, Bastard — and Duke — offers to the world its secret.

When the strong suffer, they learn their



strength. William's sensitiveness to a personal insult was the revelation of that unceasing pursuit for power so exalted that the "Conqueror" should blot out the "Bastard."

It was as a refuge against the most ferocious attack ever attempted on the life of the young Duke, that Falaise was next to serve William.

As strong natures seem to invite the attacks of a perverse fate, thus precipitating, as it were, the drama of their life and career by virtue of a courage and strength which, fearing nothing, attempt all things, so did both William and his beloved fortress again and again appear to tempt rebellion, treachery and murder to do their worst.

In the year 1046 William was inspired to take a certain journey in his domain of Normandy. To go as far as Valognes, up in the "peninsular" of Cotentin, close to Cherbourg, was, in William's day, to undertake a serious stretch of travel.

Valognes, whose calm captures you to-day at the first glance, whose streets wear so demurely the magisterial splendor of fine façades, great windows, curved wrought-iron

balconies, and ample *porte-cochères* built expressly for the pompous state of a provincial nobility; where a tiny river ripples gently past the débris of fortresses, châteaux, and gardens in ruins; where, what was once a city full of sedan chairs, carrying real marquises and plumed marchionesses, councillors great in wigs, seneschals and governors in the magnificence of their gowns and furbelows, — this the “Little Paris” of two centuries ago, is, in our day, but a city of the dead. Nothing and no one you will find in all the length and breadth of Valognes seems now-a-days to be quite fully awake. The whole town appears to have fallen into the traditional Sleeping Beauty stage. One by one its garments have fallen away in rags and tatters about it.

In William’s day Valognes was a part of that portion of Normandy which was more Danish than French.

All that part of Normandy beyond Caen, was the headquarters of William’s rebellious subjects. The country to the east of the river Dives was the more frenchified Normandy — the country Rollo and his “Pirates” had found

the more easily governed because of that base of civilization already prepared by the Roman occupation. But in Saxon Bayeux (a colony of Saxons had fled to Bayeux before the Danes came to conquer it) and in Danish Coutances and all the lands about, revolt was the more easily spread because of the prevalence of the Teutonic turbulence among nobles who were still half-heathen.

This western-most Normandy was, therefore, the hot-bed of William's most rebellious subjects. With his characteristic indifference to danger, William flung himself into the centre of this country of hating, intriguing, treacherous Cotentin. William's presence proved too great an irritant for Norman Lords whose fingers were never happier than when at play with either the dagger or the sword. Prior to his coming a conspiracy was already in process of development. As chief and front of the warming process was a cousin of William's — one Guy of Burgundy. This Guy, being deep in William's debt, was the better equipped for the part of villain. His pride of birth — he was one of the rare legitimates in the house of

Rollo — made up for any trifling loss in pride of honor.

The conspiracy, according to all accounts, was going on beautifully. Guy had agreed in the handsomest manner possible, in the event of their project being successful, merely to be Duke of the lands east of the Dives; the great Western Lords were to carve up their own lands — and each other, in such ways as best suited them. Nor could any plan have been more eminently satisfactory, to an expert professional conspirator, than the way in which William was to be despatched. His end was to be edifyingly complete. He was to be seized by all of the nobles. Whoever was luckiest was to have the stabbing of him. The plan as a plan, you see, was projected on the very broadest lines.

Meanwhile, I presume, all the pretty manners and affable ways common to conspirators on or off the stage, who are of the truly noble villain stature, were being indulged in. William, no boy now, but, at nearly nineteen a grown man, was unquestionably made as sure of the devotion of these his subjects, crowd-

ing the court he held at the lovely town of Valognes, as bows, and flatteries, and servile homage, again and again have duped the cleverest men, cradling their suspicion into somnolence.

It is a pity that a plot, to succeed, must always be talked over. That busy whispering of arch traitors to which we listen with patient indulgence, on the mimic stage, as being purely a dramatic necessity, is truer to fact than we are willing to concede. The busy whispering has been the cause of ruin to most of the plans made for the doing of evil. Could the Devil but teach his disciples to hold their tongues he yet might rule the world.

Cousin Guy and his friends, though more Dane than Norman, for once forgot their caution. They talked — and before a fool. As the fool was a fool only professionally, his cleverness was his own to use whenever he found himself to be in need of his wits. Now history has written, not once, but again and again, this eulogy on Court Fools, — truth and courage had they, and also a most singular honor.

The fool at Valognes, one Galet by name, did not disgrace his corps. He played at his trade till night-fall. Then he crept to William under cover of the dark, and told what, as fool, he had heard. William, the bravest man of his day in all France, knew when to fly; from the assassin's dagger there was but one road—and that one he took.

All through the night he rode for his life, as well as for his Duchy's safety. Across the lovely country where fattest cows now munch the livelong day; where "manoirs," châteaux and huge barns break the monotony of wheat and rye-fields, William rode across the then lonely plains and through forests dim with heavy shade. At last, along with the dawn, the turrets of a friendly château came in sight. The castle belonged to the Count de Ry.

We are not told that the Lord of Ry evinced the slightest surprise at the appearance of his own Lord and Duke, dropping, half-dead, from his foam-white steed, (all steeds figuring in such historic adventures are white,) at the somewhat unconventional hour of daybreak. Such surprises appear to have been as much in the

order of an eleventh-century day as a dropping-in at tea has become in our own time.

What the chroniclers have preserved for us is the picturesque tableau the Lord of Ry and his sons immediately arranged, so to speak, as a fine historic group.

The "Baron of Ry," duly records the chronicle, "gave to William a fresh mount, and called three squires, his sons, about him, and said to them; 'Here (Veci) you see your true Lord, mount your steeds, and according as you owe me allegiance, I command you to conduct him as far as Falloise.'" Then he (the Baron) told them the road they were to take. After which "William and his three sons took leave of him." They then all four went on their way passing the river until they came to "Falloise" where they were well received and with "grant joie."

Once in "Falloise," the old way of spelling the town, there was indeed "grant joie" among his "dear Falaisians" — "ses chers Falaisons."

William, however, had little time for sentiment. If at the age of twelve, it had been worth a governor's reign over Falaise to at-

tempt to wrench an inch of William's property away from him, the treachery of the Western Barons and his Cousin Guy's black-hearted scheme for doing away with him, when a full-grown man, had set the fiery nature of the young Duke aflame.

Once more the Château of Falaise was crowded with troops. Its dungeons and store-houses groaned under their burden of provisions. On hearing that the Western rebellion was spreading, knowing that neither Falaise though garrisoned in every loophole, nor could Rouen resist the now formidable army already marching past St. Lô, past Bayeux — almost at the very gates of Caen, — what, think you, did William do? Where, in this the darkest hour of his young and lonely state of extremity did he look for help?

There, where no one save a master-mind among statesmen would have dreamed of knocking; at a door behind which, again and again, he had found deceit luring him to perdition, and treachery with its knife open, it was at such a hostile door that brave and far-sighted William went to do his knocking.



Almost as swift a ride as that which took him from the daggars of Valognes to Falaise was the one William took to Poissy, to his King. For it was from him, and none other, the subtle brain of the greatest statesman of his age, then barely grown to a man's maturity, had told William his help was to come.

The very simplicity of William's reasoning proves his penetration. Already councils, courts, and a knowledge of the men and forces of his time had taught William the pregnant fact, that Kings and children have this trait in common; that which they want for themselves is ever a just and true claim; the same coveted by others, becomes a crime.

Normandy, ravaged, conquered and won by Henry for France, was one thing; the same Duchy set upon by rebellious Barons, became an act unspeakable in disloyalty.

Therefore, it was that "William went into France." Therefore also, it was, that back with him from Poissy rode Henry at the head of his French Army.

Now the very prettiest bit of fighting done anywhere in France was to be seen on the day

the true Normans, with William at their head, and his King Henry, with his gallant Frenchmen, met Guy of Burgundy, the Viscount of St. Sauveur, and hundreds of other great Lords and their troops on the plains about Val-ès-Dunes.

It was a battle after the good old order of knightly combats. Knight errantry was then in its dawn. The system of Knight service introduced later into England by William, was in the first full flush of its trial days.

The youthful warriors who followed William and Henry out to the plains of Val-ès-Dunes sat their huge stallions with a lordlier seat, and the Knights of the rebel's army bit the dust with a sense of deeper shame because of the new ritual which, once the vassal baptized as "chevalier," decreed the weight of a personal responsibility. The modern idea of individualism began its long battle in this and other encounters where Norman met Norman, — not knowing, as they wielded the lance, or the "virile arm" of the sword, they were fighting for other and far greater forces than merely to capture certain fortress-towns or stretches of Norman land.

Actors are rarely philosophers. William rushing in at the very thick of the action, as soon as his enemy was met, four leagues from Caen, fought with that tempestuous fury of ardor which ever characterized his action in battle. His physical power and strength of arm would have told in any contest. But when in the field, he was one of those fighters who loved fighting for its own sake. Wherever the contest raged hottest, there William was to be found, mightiest among the mighty, dealing blows, whether of lance or of mace, that won for him his Dukedom, as here at Val-ès-Dunes, or when, through the shield-wall at Senlac, he fought his way to the crown at Westminster.

Valiant as were the deeds performed in this brilliant tourney of horsemen at Val-ès-Dunes, William's youthful, supple, Samson-like strength with his lance outdid them all. Horses and Knights went down before him as ripe corn before the scythe. The Viking in his blood was in its true element. The old Scandinavian thirst for red human blood was not sated until the chivalry of Normandy opposed to him went down in death or was made

prisoner, before William's Norman cry of "Dex Aïe!"

Great as were the services rendered by Henry and his army, on that memorable day, it was the youthful William's pure strength in feats of arms, his courage, and his masterly ways in battle that won him his true right to govern his Duchy.

For after Val-ès-Dunes, the Normandy west as well as east of the Dives, was Norman and William's. Rebellion within his own domain had been stricken unto death on the plains of Caen. He who first conquered his own Duchy, later on led his soldiers to conquest beyond his own domain. The Conqueror of England, as the historians are at pains to tell you, first rehearsed his great part on the plains of Caen and in storming the border fortresses of Alençon and Brionne.

Falaise, that had already done so much for its hero-Duke, was to continue to help him still. It was in his favorite fortress he made his preparations for that famous siege which was to be stained with one of the crimes of his reign. Great as he was, he was as sensitive as a woman

to ridicule. "La pel! La pel!" was the cry shouted out by the foolish citizens of Alençon, as they hung upon their walls the tanner's hides meant to mock the mean birth of the greatest man in Europe. William swore "Par la splendeur de Dieu,"—his favorite oath when the darker Scandinavian side of his nature was roused—that the burghers of Alençon should "be dealt with like a tree whose branches are cut off with the pollarding knife." He kept his word. Thirty-two Alençon citizens saw their feet and hands thrown across the walls that had been curtained with the hateful hides.

After extending his Norman domains, William still had once again to fight his King, to prove to him, at the battle of Varaville, for a last final time that he, William, and not Henry, was to rule Normandy.

Falaise served the Duke as a base for his preparations for this decisive battle.

After Normandy was rid of home rebels and foreign French invaders, both the Duke and his fortress had intervals of rest. Such periods of unwonted leisure in both their histories,

were utilized by William to increase the commercial prosperity of the town — as the History of the Great Fair proves further on; to introduce the beginnings of agricultural security and civic order in the enforcing of the “Truce of God,” and the establishment of the Curfew; and in enlarging and improving the walls and towers of a town that had proved to him its worth and loyalty, not once, but a dozen times.

When the greatest of all his adventures befell him, when into his scheming, daring statesman’s and general’s head there burst, full-orbed, the project for a conquering of England, first and foremost to his clear-tongued trumpet call for followers — for an army — there rose about the ducal leader the “Nobility of Falaise.”

The forests about his birthplace went also to the building of the ships that were to take his “chers Falaisians” literally to their kingdom beyond the sea. The Bayeux tapestry will show you what havoc the woodmen’s axes did in all the woods about Falaise. When with their big stallions — those mighty sires of the Percherons — with their cider and water

barrels (the same are to be seen carried along the roads of Dives to-day), with their leathern armor, pointed shields, helmets and lances — not forgetting the spits of meat; when this great store of provisions and military equipment and all the strange motley of men William gathered about him, went into the ships lining the Dives shores, there was scarce a house in Falaise but had sent its noblest male representative to give color to this invasion being truly called a Norman Conquest.

At that weird and brutal, yet most picturesque of banquets, when, after the battle of Hastings, William and his "nobles," sat down at midnight, on the height that had been as a solid wall of steel, and where, as torches flamed, they lit the faces of the dead that had made that living wall, — behold the noble Sires d'Aubigny, de Blainville, de Bray, de Cinteaulx, de Courcy, Roger Marmion, and William's own half-brothers, Odo and Robert — all dwellers in or near about Falaise — counting the heads that were still alive. As they passed the glass, and the shouts of triumph rang out, acclaiming their Duke King and Conqueror, we can pic-

ture the central figure the torches lit. Tall, already stout of body, fierce of eye and feature, and with blood-stained tunic, yet even in this hour, in all the heady triumph of his "Day of Days" William was every inch a King. His dignity placed him above the brutalities of the situation.

Even as the torches played upon the stern face that rose up beneath the quiet stars, as calm amid the dead as among his half-frenzied Knights, so did William illumine, with the torch of his genius, his brutal, ignorant age. The clever, yet coarse, Norman features of his native land he blent into some symmetry of law and order. The people he conquered, distracted, disorganized, before the light of his mind played upon their trouble, were harmonized into the beginnings of that great nation that stands to-day before civilized Europe, for what William's whole reign taught — the unusual virtues of personal and national loyalty, of rectitude and a strict self-discipline.

The last act of the Conqueror's tragic death gives us a final touching instance of Falaisian devotion.



After that false step of his charger among the burning streets of Mantes, the French town that, in his wrath at the French King, he had fired—a stumbling that gave the King his death-blow—the unrelenting fate that hovers above greatness as carrion above the dead, at last had its chance for wreaking its vengeance. As that mighty soul passed upwards out of the huge body that lay quiet enough, then, on its couch in the Priory of St. Gervais, at the ringing of the matin bells of Rouen's great cathedral—on that morning of Thursday, a ninth of September, 1087, the grim sisters gathered thick and close. In an hour the body lay, stripped; the death chamber was as desolate as was the grave making ready at Caen. An event so mighty of import that the news travelled from Normandy to Sicily in a single day, was yet so mockingly slighted nearer home that neither son nor courtier was found to give the corpse of the greatest man of his age a fitting burial.

Once more William's "dear Falaisians" came to their loved "Bastard's" rescue. That gallant Knight, Herlevin, Arlette's husband,

reappears upon the scene. He it was who arranged the details of his mighty stepson's strange burial. Down the Seine, where the ivory horns of William's Viking ancestors, a little more than one hundred years before, had been heard echoing along that "Route des Cygnes," the stately barge containing all that was mortal of that greatest of Normans who had completed the "Pirate's" work, drifted down to Caen. As by fire he had come to his death, so through flames he was carried to his abbey, the streets of Caen filling suddenly with fire and smoke, as the monks, in their slow rhythmic march, were chanting about the coffin the office of the dead.

He who was first among Normans to claim his rights was, at the very last, to have the law of justice he had preached turn against him. His grave was disputed by a dispossessed owner, as he was about to be lowered into it. The cry of "Haro!" that cry for justice Rollo had taught every Norman to respect, was shouted above the seven feet of earth, all too small for the Conqueror's bulky frame.

After the clinking of the purchase money,

the mortal part of William lay, for a few brief centuries, at rest. When, with the Revolution came the rage among men to prove their contempt for the greatness that had made them, William's grave was once more violated and his ashes were scattered to the Norman winds.

## CHAPTER V

### HISTORY OF THE GREAT FAIR

#### I

**I**N all centuries Kings and rulers have been under the influence of some prevailing mental fashion or mania. In the strenuous fighting days of the earlier centuries a man's character, when he had power, could be gauged by the direction in which the influences of his time pulled him. Piety was one test; the establishment of law and order was another. Robert the Duke, in a moment of calm, had felt himself stirred by the imaginative appeal spiritual impulse took in his day. His son William, when in command of his rare leisure, had the truer instinct of a ruler's higher duty; he set himself the less picturesque, more unselfish task, of righting the wrongs and meeting the needs of his people at home.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries there were four powerful fashions in thought and ambition. Princes then, as now, enjoyed the luxury of indulging their predilections in grander form and circumstance than lesser men. The building of great cathedrals; the pious founding of rich men's so-called poor houses, known as monasteries; the establishment of fairs; and the leading of a company of Crusaders to the Holy Land—in any one or in all of these four directions, Kings, Dukes, and Barons might expend time and treasure, and look for their reward in the mouths of men—for flattery in those days was as much the fashion as criticism has become in our own time.

In following three of the above-named fashions of his day, William the Great proved both his policy and his wisdom.

William was carefully, painstakingly pious. He understood his century. He meant that the strongest organization of his time should be on his side. He set an example, therefore, to all men, of strict devotion to a religion which he knew how to use, in masterly fashion,

as a cloak and weapon, when the time came. He could build, in meek obedience to Papal command, the two great abbeys in Caen as a "penance" for having married, in Mathilda of Flanders, the wife of his choice; but the Church of Rome, in its turn, must send a consecrated banner and a ring with Saint Peter's hair in sign of its consecration of the "holy war" of Normandy against England.

In the building mania of his age so clever a ruler as William saw nothing but good. Churches, hospitals, and monasteries were in process of erection throughout his Duchy, from Cherbourg to Rouen. Quarries were worked as industriously as, later on, the forests were hewn down for the building of the ships that were to capture England.

In so stirring and active a period, the commercial and financial affairs of the Duchy were naturally not neglected. Civic and military strength being a guarantee of agricultural and commercial security, Normandy soon became one of the chief European centres of trade. Fairs were the first European awakening to the immense advantages to be gained

by trade centralization. What the great departmental stores are in our own day, the fairs of feudal, mediæval, and renascent Europe were to their time and period.

Of all these earlier fairs the Fair of Guibray and that of Beaucaire held, for centuries, in France, the foremost place. The early pre-eminence of Guibray was directly due to Robert, and later on, to the keen commercial instincts of William.

In an earlier chapter Robert's cleverness in utilizing the miracle-drawing power of the Church of Guibray as the nucleus of a Fair was noted. This first Fair Robert placed in the Camp-de-Foire, close to his fortress walls. There, for some years, the Fair held its own against all neighboring rivals, increasing in importance with each year. William removed its site to the Falaisian suburb of Guibray, at the same time extending to it what were deemed extraordinary privileges for those exacting days. Taxes and tithes were not to be levied on this Fair, exceptions which were continued by subsequent rulers and Kings. As a result of such privileges, the commercial

prosperity of both the Fair and of Falaise became a synonym for success. Falaise, indeed, owed its later prosperity to its Fair. With the advent of cannon its military importance was doomed. But the town lived on, drawing half commercial Europe to pass through its great gateways. With the advent of the railroads, fairs, on a large scale, have become as rare as the costumes that brightened them. The commercial traveller, that carrier-pigeon who now follows all the trade winds, with his box of samples, has settled the problem of trade distribution for our era.

Horses alone, even in our time of easy transportation, have been found more difficult of conveyance than samples of silk and linen. The horse-Fair, therefore, at Guibray, as my earlier chapters prove, still lives on.

From the eleventh up to the middle of our own century, with the resistant power which comes with continuity, the great Fair of Guibray drew Dutch and English tradesmen; Spaniards with their steel and cutlery; Germans from across the Rhine; and Hungarians with their leather goods. These and their fol-



lowers met along the high-roads, dark-skinned grocers from Marseilles; silk merchants from Lille and Lyons; hosiers from Orléans; clothiers from Rouen and Sedan; and goldsmiths and jewellers from Paris.

France might be at peace or at war; the map of Europe might be changing its outlines with seeming inconsequence of design; Falaise itself might be passing from Norman Dukes to hated English rule; or yet be opening its gates to welcome the conquering troops of its own Charles VII. — to be French forevermore; Protestant and Catholic might be shouting their creeds through the mouth of cannon to the stout bastions of William the Conqueror's great stronghold — and still, year after year, pigs and cattle were being prodded to the great market where the yellow August sun was to light indiscriminately, jewels from Paris workshops, tanned hides, silks and satins, glass and porcelain, and the velvet coats of smooth-skinned thoroughbreds.

During three years only, did Falaise see its prosperity threatened. Henri III. revoked the edict granting its privileges to the Fair at Gui-

bray, ordering that the Fair should be held at Caen. Falaise saw ruin staring from every forsaken inn and deserted shop-window. Still, half ruined as it was, when, as a fervent Catholic it found itself asked to receive as its rightful King the gallant Henri IV., as one man, town and fortress rose to protest. Henri's catholicism was too recent to make the religious stuff of which true French Kings should be made, thought Falaise. Once more fortress and town found themselves at their familiar posts. But recently converted Henri captured the fortress. To punish the town he refused to restore to it its vanished Fair.

A citizen of Guibray, one Nicholas le Sasser, was inspired to a fine action. He went out to the King's camp at Saint Denis, threw himself in approved suppliant fashion at Henri's feet, and began an impassioned harangue. Being doubly a Norman, since he was also a lawyer, he arranged his effect with due regard to dramatic climax. After depicting the consternation of his fellow citizens at the disaster that threatened all Guibray and Falaise, he proceeded to tempt Henri. He made him the

finest of all gifts; he presented him, with a large liberality, all the youth of the town. To prove his sincerity he proceeded to offer up his own three sons. "Great Prince," he cried — still on his knees — "you have already tested their courage" (presumably in their character of rebels), "in you they have had cause to admire and to recognize a Prince yet more brave than they. For this reason they wish to attach themselves to your person for life."

Henri, not to be outdone in oratorical effect, in his turn cried out "Go! reassure your town. I wished but to test her. Now that she submits herself, I give her back her Fair of Guibray, together with all the privileges and exemptions granted by my kingly predecessors."

Then did the streets of Guibray and Falaise ring with cries of rejoicing. "*Vive Henri!*" "*Vive Henri!*" was shouted till throats could shout no more. Louder still the belfries of St. Gervais and of Notre Dame de Guibray rang out their glad exultant chimes.

## II

The formal opening of the great Fair took place on the evening of the Assumption, directly after the picturesque and impressive religious procession had passed before the timbered façades of the streets of Falaise and Guibray.

For days before the opening, trees and bushes along the high-roads were as regularly blanched, in the season of mid-August, to a whitened pallor by clouds of dust as, each spring, the oaks and elms along the road-side felt the rising sap stir within their veins. Like certain modern Parisian faces, their pallor was worn as proof of their fashionable *maquillage*. For fashionable, in the truest sense of the word, did the Fair become during the later sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

An interesting reprint of a seventeenth-century engraving — the actual date of which is 1658 — reproduces for us, with minute detail, this city of the Fair at the height of its season of two hundred and more years ago.

All the houses that are old now, sunken of

beam, and faded in color and complexion, when Guibray sat for her portrait to Chavvel, were then bright and gay of hue. Their glossy timbers, zig-zag ornamentations, quaint carvings, and picturesque gabled roofs, were then neither quaint nor picturesque, but merely in the best fashion of their day. The shops of Falaise and Guibray were, also, then brave of sign. Elaborate and dainty were the conceits that, in iron, or carved or painted wood, were conveyed to you the fact that keys were fashioned, or boots were cobbled, or bread was made in the houses thus richly tricked out. Le Vieux Paris of the Paris Exhibition of 1900, admirably reproduced the gain in street effects due to such mediæval artistic signs. The color and vivacity contributed to street scenes by burghers in costume was, also, proved anew in that successful attempt to reproduce a lost period. And every fashion in clothes, from the short fighting tunics and flowing, fashionable cyclades of the eleventh century up to the fripperies of the Directoire period have passed beneath the two Falaisian gates of Le Comte and Bocey.

When Chavvel's pencil traced the fashions of his day, it was to reproduce the elaborate gowns, wide and stiff-skirted, in which Anne of Austria charmed Buckingham and Mazarin. Her enemies and rivals, those lovely Duchesses who had fought her in the Fronde, wearied, perhaps, of intrigues and conspiracies, might have been caught descending from their coaches at the Fair entrances. Chatelaines for miles about the lovely Calvados region, and from far beyond its confines, came up as regularly on shopping expeditions to the Bon Marché of their day, as ladies from San Francisco or Chicago step across the water to line the modern Parisian shop counters. There is, indeed, the same concentrated energy of purpose and intent fixity to be read in the carriage and walk of these stately seventeenth-century dames who crowd the Guibrayan streets as we may note any day, from April to October, in the carriage of our fair compatriots who contribute a brighter lustre to La Rue de la Paix than does its array of sparkling gems. Whatever instability caprice may suggest to a woman's emotional machinery, in her indefatigable

pursuit of the fashions her ways are as fixed as is the orbit of the North Star.

The gallants of those days wore feathered hats, mantles, lace jackets and high boots. Their rapiers and swords seem as appropriate to a Normandy Fair in hot August as is a gentleman's evening wear to a dinner in mid-summer in our own period. Peasants and beggars; cavaliers on caracoling steeds that must have carried as great a dismay to the foot passengers in these narrow streets as do the modern automobiles to affrighted pedestrians in our own thoroughfares; stately coaches; carts of every size and description; men and women, farmers and boys riding pillion with baskets between; huntsmen or nobles with falcon on wrist — the latter betokening the rank of the rider; farmers leading huge stallions in a string, riders thrown, others mounting, still others in the act of dismounting at the inn doors — before us, as in a glass, you may look upon the counterfeit presentments of the people who went up that older Fair.

Acrobats made things lively for one group of passers-by; soothsayers were then as obvi-

ously eagerly listened to as their tribe have ever been, whether it be in wise Greece, in sceptical Rome, or in our own highly civilized state of cultivated unbelief. On the boards of an open air improvised theatre, an actor hatted and cloaked, declaimed in an attitude full of grace, either verses or a tale. His audience was as motionless and attentive as ever the talented Monsieur Coquelin has faced when giving one of his incomparable monologues before the smart world. And in the *beuvettes* (drinking stalls) just beyond the theatre group, a sport and pastime as old as Adam were indulged in. In rustic thatched sheds, where cider barrels much wider than the tables were all the advertisement needed, apparently, every Jack appeared to have his Jill, as the necessary complement to his glass. Just as in the Exposition of this year of our Lord 1900, where strolling couples, confident in the distractions offered to sightseers, within the magical grounds did their courting with the most innocent publicity, so through the long centuries have lusty Norman peasants felt their lovers' arms about their waists, and the crimson of their cheeks and lips



crushed — in full daylight, without thought of shame.

In the more fashionable inns and hostelries one can picture the archers of the earlier centuries and the *mousquetiers* of a later one, off duty, come to ask farmers and merchants the news of Europe: whether in this year of 1658, Turenne was still friends with Cromwell, and how Mazarin was now governing France and the Queen. For fairs were to feudal and later Europe what the newspapers and cablegrams are to us, — the gossiping distributors of news. Fashions, also, in customs and in architecture, political opinions and convictions were as moulded and fashioned by such large assemblages of men, as they are now by the prevailing travelling mania and the press.

Of the swarm of the gentry and nobility who, as late as 1830, continued to pack the narrow Guibrayan streets, the historian Galeron gives us a vivid picture. "So crowded and so great is the noise that the first days of the Fair are in truth insupportable. In the midst of so great a concourse of people, it is impossible for anything like order to reign — one is shoved,

pushed, knocked about, pitched into at every turn by horses, coaches, carriages, and by porters hurrying in all directions at once." The larger streets were "packed with lookers-on, with saunterers, with eager buyers, all day and far into the night. Women appear in gorgeous apparel, and the gallants in their train are no less splendidly turned out." Fashion makes its newest and latest bow, and "happy indeed are those who distinguish themselves by the good taste of their costume and the grace and ease of their bearing and manners."

In the ante-revolutionary days, monasteries were as full of "guests" as were the neighboring châteaux with costlier company; for old customs die hard. Those two most formidable rivals to the inn-keeper's trade, the abbé and the seigneur, were difficult to kill; and in a town as hard pressed as was Falaise for that fortnight of its Fair, the cool chambers of the rich abbeys in and about Falaise must have been as full of gallants and gay ladies as their cells and cloisters were of money-making monks.

The sandals and girdles of cowléd men were

no unusual adjuncts to the crowds frequenting the Fair-town. For the monk of the middle ages was as great a tavern and Fair haunter as any other idler. When the glass was passed, or the dice came out, no better judge of luck, or keener gambler than those roistering monks so dear to the nineteenth-century fancy and fiction. Scholars as well as the monks rubbed shoulders with the seigneurs, the soldiers, and the merchants, who, among other attractions, could count on the *filles de joie* presenting the pathos of their tragic gayety.

Lower still lay that darker social sediment all crowds bring in their train. Cut-purses, pedlars, adventurers, pardoners, charlatans, quacks, and the dealer in false relics, — for all such the bailiffs of Guibray and Falaise were kept on duty night and day. The jails that were empty would be filled, stocks would be found too few in number, and the gallows yonder, on the clear hillside, would, after the Fair was done, have gruesome company.

Such have been the groups of men that have passed through the streets of Guibray. The sounds of their noisy, crowded moment of life

are gone. The whirr of their traffic is silenced. Though the town they filled is still standing — street upon street still opening out before you — all is as silent as a grave. The City of the Fair is now a City of the Dead.

As now one wanders through these mute and melancholy streets, one starts at a sound. Where once the wealth of Europe lay, rotting timbers gape and yawn. Where shone the glint of steely arms and armor, dazzling the eyes of our late sixteenth-century warrior-dandies, now no more harmful blades than those of a pale and weedy grass affright and charm the gaze.

The once bustling inns are as silent now as is the cemetery yonder. Here and there, where the film of phantom insects dances in the summer haze, a creaking sign disperses the revellers. *Le Grand Turc* still swings its bleared and faded portrait of a turbaned gentleman of color. *L'Aigle d'Or's* wide open doors invite you, as of old, to enter; you and the ghosts may have the silent chambers, the empty halls, and rotting stable-stalls to yourselves.

From some of the stouter-built houses there will come to you the whirring noise of machinery in motion. Through the narrow windows, above a row of house plants, you may look upon strangely whirling figures. What manner of man is that in close fitting jersey, wan of face, whose tireless motion is as ceaseless as that of a Dancing Dervish? Is it indeed some ghost of the past, rewarmed to life by this fine summer air? Such are the figures of those cotton spinners who, seeking cheap quarters, have sought refuge in this silent city. They, and the mangy dogs, scenters of decay, alone people the deserted streets.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHÂTEAU DE FALAISE

#### I

AN interesting proof of the wealth of France in mediæval monuments is presented with striking effect at Falaise. On these bright cliffs are two survivals of feudal Normandy, each in its way unique among European curiosities. The little city of the Fair must stand almost alone as a record of bygone ways in commercial dealings. On the prow, so to speak, of the boat-shaped rock on which both Falaise and its château are built, there still stands, virtually intact, its chief glory, the magnificent eleventh-century fortress.

Both the city of the Fair and the château have outlived their uses. Yet both present to our investigating nineteenth-century eyes whole periods of history as only stone and mortar can

reproduce them. If the tottering houses of Guibray look the very picture of neglect and decay, the château preserves, with peculiar distinction, its look of power.

The Château of Falaise offers to the eye none of those delicacies of outline and refinement in traceries which later strongholds — built in the period of transition from the architecture of defence to that of pure elegance — will reveal. Falaise is staunchly, uncompromisingly feudal. It embodies the bold defiance, the self-confidence, the readiness of resource of its Norman builders. The intrinsic character of the château remains intact. Its fine feudal air is inherent, in no way dependent on accessory or accident of ornament.

From the point of view of feudal Europe, such a situation as that of the Donjon or Château of Falaise was absolutely ideal. Its front of cliff, breasting the plain below, with the further natural fortification of its neighbor cliffs, was a fortress site in a thousand. The town within the wall girdle, set about with trees, full of fountains, gardens,

houses, Norman and Gothic sculptured churches—such a town, so tightly clasped by its stout stone arms, seemed as secure as a sanctuary.

The history of Falaise is the history of the truth and fallacy of that belief. Its château, or fortress, experienced the vicissitudes common to all structures that stand for an idea. Such buildings last as long as they continue to typify the ideal of strength current among the chief military minds of their day. Every form of fortifications is but the last experiment devised by man for protection against attack. Europe, from the Mediterranean to the Northern Seas, has been the vast arena on which, one after another, conflicting military convictions have been fought out to a finish. For centuries the experiment of making man a power behind a shield—whether it were that of the fortress wall or of an oblong bit of steel—studded Europe with fortified towns. When in battle array, men and horses, encased as they were in armor, were each in themselves a species of movable fortification. When cannon came in the true



combat between *walled* towns and men in iron casings, and the ball that flies, was begun, to leave man pitiably unprotected before balls that travel now with almost the velocity of light.

## II

That the rock of Falaise was a fortified camp long before the Normans saw in its site a formidable military outpost, is a disputed point. The romantic, less exacting writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have set Falaise against a background as full of legendary figures as it is tinted in mystical hues. The theory that the grandchildren of Noah settled this region alone will satisfy those whose love of antiquity is fashioned upon such pages of Deuteronomy as treat solely of genealogy. To others, less insistent on a Biblical descent, the mystic Isis of the Druids emerges as the divinity whose temple was here fashioned by nature itself. Boat-shaped, the great rock was the temple of temples for the goddess whose symbol was a ship. To the Druids and their mysticism succeeded the Gauls, and to them the Romans. Langevin will tell you, with edifying sense of security, that no less a personage than Julius Cæsar himself erected the first fortress of Falaise, to serve him as a base for the further subjugation of the

westernmost part of the country then known as *Armorique*. The very word *donjon* this historian complacently accepts in evidence of the illustrious birth of his home-fortress, translating *quasi domus Julii* into "Maison de Jules."

It is in the year 946 that we find the first mention of Falaise in the Norman Chronicle. "I have heard," said Bernard the Dane, to Louis d'Outre Mer, "that you wish to give to Hue-le-Grand all the country beyond the Seine which contains the flower of all the fortresses, good towns and chivalry. In this country are grown the provisions for Rouen and its neighbor towns; in this country are Avranches, Coutances, Bayeux, etc. etc., Caen and Falaise, and many other good towns and châteaux."

I, for one, am entirely content to accept Bernard the Dane's word that Falaise, in the now sufficiently remote tenth century, was already a flourishing town. From the above quoted conversation until the year of 1027-28, Falaise is rarely mentioned. Already in the time of Rollo's sons she was the chief town in the "compté" of Hiesmois, a town that became formidable with the walls Richard the Fearless,

third Norman Duke, built about the town itself. He greatly enlarged and strengthened the donjon, or château, as such strongholds were called in that day.

These feudal châteaux were in no sense the elaborate structures that arose in later times. In the days of the earlier Dukes, such castles were often mere defences of wood surrounded by a ditch. But the possession of even the ruder forts or châteaux made every Baron owning one formidable. He could defy his over-Lord, or sally forth to carry death or destruction to neighbor, Lord, or innocent serfs, and generally overawe and terrify.

In studying the structure of so redoubtable a stronghold as was the Château of Falaise we are at once struck with its amazing simplicity of design. It belongs to the earlier ruder periods of Norman workmanship, — to the period which, a little later, covered England with Norman castles or keep-towers. In all such buildings there was a general uniformity of plan. The Tower of London and the Norman keep at Newcastle-on-Tyne are two admirable surviving examples of such Towers

in England. The Château of Falaise differed somewhat from these later donjons. Owing to the natural advantages of its site, to its great height above the vale, and to the further defences offered by the heights of Noron and of Mont Mirat, whose near cliffs closed about the Falaisian spur of rock like bristling sentinels, the fortress could remain exceedingly simple in its construction. Its square mass of stone work measured about sixty feet to the square, its elevation varying from fifteen to sixty feet. The northern and southern façades were buttressed in all their length by rude but enormously strong buttresses. The chief strength of the building lay in its walls, still to be measured at nine feet nine or ten inches. In certain parts of the donjon these walls are in fact double walls with the intervals filled with rubble, and with passages in them. There is a fine wide stairway in the north-western wall wide enough for two men-at-arms to walk abreast. The massiveness of the enclosing outer walls gives, perhaps, as does no other part of the structure, the impression of the strength that may come with the mere

building of stone on stone. The Normans, in utilizing their walls for inner passages and stairways, unquestionably copied in this their cleverer predecessors, the Romans. In the third and fourth centuries the fortifications of Rome had such passages in them, the inner wall being made of very fine brick work.

There are no refinements of taste or skill in mason's work discoverable in the original keep of Falaise. Everything about the structure proclaims it as the work of the Norman in his rude elementary stage as builder. Its origin belonged to that crude period when the Northmen, feeling still insecure in this not wholly subdued land of "Neustria," made self-protection the first of all laws. Rebuilt and restored as has been the fortress in certain portions, its walls and the masonry of its inner walls show, by the most telling of all proofs, that a large part of the famous structure still remains as the Normans built it. The rubble, the wide-jointed masonry, the roughness of the stone work, are all early Norman work.

Such ornament as the original keep still

shows proclaims the work of the axe rather than of the chisel. The two round-headed windows facing the south, overlooking the Valdante; the round-arched doorways with shafts with their plain or cushion capitals; the roughly sculptured heads in the angles, close to the rudely modelled window moulding;—all this is Norman work in its primitive stage of development.

In the small upper room, famous as the meeting-place of Robert and Arlette, and the birth-chamber of their illustrious child,—a fact still stoutly contested by most of the English historians,—in this room the vaulting is the groined vault without ribs, the very sign and seal of earliest eleventh-century work.

One looks in vain for traces of that Byzantine influence in richness of ornamentation which gave to the Norman architecture of sixty or seventy years later such splendor, semi-barbaric as was the character of that splendor. The original keep as a whole, one must conclude, was the work of a single period, and that period the time of William and his immediate successors.

In its outer defences, Falaise neither presented, nor indeed did she need to present, any of those more elaborate devices we find in later donjons. Such records as we have of the structural character of the gates and the walls show none of the ingenious "curtain walls," double and triple moats which Coucy (1228) or Pierrefords (1390) present. The whole system of defence at Falaise was based on the principle of the impregnable character of its rocky cliff front. Its walls with their watch towers, bastions, and outer and inner gateways offer evidence of no more intricate devices than the almost elementary ones of forcing the enemy to present its flank to the warriors on the battle-mented heights.

With its forty towers, its six city gates, the tower-studded walls of the town, moats, ponds, drawbridges and portcullises, Falaise might well count on withstanding all assaults save one — that of grim-visaged famine.

The interior of the donjon is still divided on the first floor into large and small halls, the guard rooms ; its upper story into small chambers, where the Dukes, under Norman rule, and



English governors and captains during the English occupation, retired to rest after the long hunts, or to sleep during prolonged sieges; in the southern façade was the chapel, small and vaulted, in the old days only to be entered from without; and below all, the dungeons in the living rock. The dwelling-house, the true château of our more modern days, now the college, was within the walled enclosure.

Secret and subterranean passage-ways led from the fortress to the town, and from the town into the outer country. All of which precautions suggest to us our own more enviable state of security. Perhaps it is rather the policeman's club than either free education or republican institutions which is the corner stone of a true state of civilized society. Even in times of peace, in such an over-protected town as Falaise, one must have had disagreeable reminders, at every turning, of what it all meant. In those days war came home, personally, to every hearth and household. Pillage, rapine, fire — these were the demons that overleapt the walls when walls crumbled.

## III

When the English King, Henry V., made the first true capture of Falaise, taking the fortress that had already weathered seven sieges, by the force of cannon, he made his great Captain, Jean Talbot, Governor of the fortress.

With the revival of English rule, great changes and many additions were made to the keep. The revolution in military tactics and methods of warfare brought about by the introduction of cannon demanded that all fortresses built on the plan of the older Keeps must be changed, or strengthened, to meet the new dangers from the cannon mouth.

The building of Talbot Tower was the immediate outcome of the new military ne-

cessity. Its shape was fashioned somewhat after the Norman Round Church Towers so common in Norfolk and Suffolk. But all resemblance ceased with this similarity of form.

Talbot Tower, although built in an incredibly short period of time, is one of the masterpieces of military architecture. The delicacy of its design, its grace and symmetry, both of proportion and elevation, proclaim it, at a glance, as a structure possessing the elements and finish of a perfect work of art. The eye rests upon it in satisfied delight. Its springing lightness makes its strength seem accident rather than design.

And from whatever point of view one tests its beauty — whether from the vale below one watches it soar heavenwards, with imitative aerial lightness; or whether one fronts it from the Noron heights, where its columnar symmetry outrivals the sunlit tree-trunks; or if, nearer still, the eye, in pure fascination of watching the line of perfect grace grow from the flanging base to the melting roof and cornice lines — from whatever point or dis-

tance one looks upon Talbot Tower, one finds it flawless.

The masons' work alone is a marvel of stone laying, the entire surface of the Tower having the finish of the later Renaissance work. Its height of one hundred and eleven feet is divided into four stories, five, including the dungeons in the rockwall. In the middle of the Tower is an opening running from base to summit. This opening was for the working of the deep well, which made the Tower quite independent of the château, in case the garrison should be forced to sustain a last attack in these narrower quarters. As in the older keep, the stairways are inter-mural, being circular in this smaller building. The subdivisions of the various floors conform to the necessities of the housing of many men in so comparatively confined a space. Small chambers, with stone seats in the deeply recessed windows; a subterranean dungeon, and a single upper room boasting of a wide fireplace: such was the interior of the structure.

For further protection against surprise in

case the château were taken, an enormously thick wall separated the Tower from the older stronghold. In this wall, in times of peace, a passage way led from keep to Tower. But in times of siege all communication was cut off. The commander and his garrison, with their stores of provision and ammunition in the deep dungeons beneath, with their well of pure water and behind their armor of walls ten feet thick, could count upon holding out for months against the still crude artillery of the fifteenth century.

The château itself, at the period of the building of the great tower, was entirely restored. The chapel of the château, almost a ruin, was also rebuilt. Not content with all this building and rebuilding, Talbot proceeded to beautify and adorn his own particular chambers. *Les Salles Talbot* were still rich in faded frescos and late Gothic ornamentations only a short fifty years ago. The Gothic-arched windows with their chiselled trefoil openings contribute the sole notes of elegance to the château structure. The older historians are lavish of descriptions concerning this Talbot

Hall. The English governor, obviously, had brought to Falaise, along with his English garrison and mounted men-at-arms, — the record of whose pay in golden francs — *francs d'or* — you still may read in M. de Malherbes' manuscript records — along with his English horse and English rule, Talbot had carried to the fortress on the hill his English love of comfort. The wide open fire-place in this his French hall must have recalled to him those generous hearths where the leaping flames warmed English hearts. As the fire's glow lit the painted walls of his great room, fusing the splendor of the rich interior into harmony, Talbot's days and months of exile from English courts and the ease of castle life must have been, at least, somewhat mitigated.

#### IV

To peruse the further history of the fortress, after the disappearance of the most striking and masterful of all the great personages who strode across the historic Falaisian stage, from the rise of the curtain after William the

Conqueror's death, to its fall with Napoleon the Great's hasty and disdainful sojourn of a few hours in the town, is to pass in review the long possession of human passions. Filial disloyalty succeeded William's brilliant example of right conduct in domestic relations. On his death bed, true with his last breath to his sense of justice, William avowed "though he foresaw the wretchedness of any land over which Robert should be ruler," yet he could not keep his eldest son from his birthright—the ducal crown of Normandy. Robert, therefore, as rightful heir of his Norman father received at Rouen the sword, the mantle and the crown that made him Duke of Normandy and Count of Maine. The sword he used to such purpose against the Saracens in the first great Crusade of 1095 that he was offered the crown of Jerusalem. Thirteen years after his coronation, at the battle of Tinchebraye, his mantle was trailed in the dust, and his ducal crown exchanged for one of martyrdom.

The contradictions in Robert's character brought the same disasters to his duchy that complex and weak natures—who are strong

only in melodramatic situations — are certain to precipitate. Robert could wantonly bring about and foster the only difference William and Mathilda ever experienced; yet he could gather about him, a few years after his accession to the Dukedom, an army six hundred thousand strong, heading this force, which included all the brave Norman nobles, with such gallant bravery that Niceæ, Antioch, and finally Jerusalem went down before him.

The empty honor of having refused to be King of Jerusalem could hardly have been of staying comfort to Robert when he returned to his “beloved Normandie,” and found to what a pass, by his own acts, he had brought her. He had mortgaged Normandy to his brothers William and Henry. From that mortgage dates the tragedy of disputed possession which made this donjon on a hill a target, for centuries, for English bowmen and French archers.

The history of the Château of Falaise from the year 1100 to 1450, is the history of the quarrels that arose as to who, after William the Great's second son had immediately seized his



mortgaged territory, should thereafter own and hold Falaise.

The quarrel was sufficiently lively during the lifetime of William the Conqueror's three turbulent sons. The difference in family opinion as to who was rightful owner of the cliff fortress was decided at Tinchebraye. But Falaise, loyal to its rightful Duke, would receive no English Kings—for Henry, Conqueror of Robert, was English born. Loyalty is usually strongest in the strong; and Falaise could afford the luxury of fighting or sulking for her principles behind walls of such thickness as hers. At Robert's commands to receive Henry, however, she opened her gates.

Once the English foot on Norman soil, and rivers of good English and Norman blood were to flow before Normandy learned the hard lesson, that to be safe, — and saved — she must be French.

In the next three hundred years what a multitude of historic personages crowd the Falaisian heights! As successor to the despotic-featured Henry I., his greater son Henry II. appears as Duke of Normandy, and King of

England. It was Henry II.'s wise custom to celebrate the Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide festivities in Normandy. Falaise, the town, the château, and the surrounding country wore their gayest Christmas dress to fête the dark-eyed, long-visaged Eleonora, her suite of ladies, and her royal husband when, in 1159, the English Court came to the castle to make merry.

The clever, subtle face of Thomas à Becquet peers at us through the donjon's arched windows. For in 1162 he was signing Henry's State papers in his quality of Chancellor. *Thomâ Cancellario* is the signature you may still read on certain papers dated "Falloise." At the time of the sojourn of the English Court at Falaise, Henry and his beloved archbishop were the best of friends. Doubtless one might have seen the two, any fine day, walking about the ramparts, talking, in most amical fashion, about the rights of bishops and the liberties of the church, — the very questions that, only eight years later, discussed in different mood and temper, led to Henry's historic exclamation, "I find myself indeed unfortu-

nate! Surrounded with officers and subjects on whom I have lavished favors — and yet there is not one to rid me of this persecuting priest!”

From the dark tragedy under the aisles at Canterbury that was the consequence of that unlucky outburst, and the subsequent troubles of Henry's domestic life and reign, it is a relief to turn to a certain other festivity held by his son at the Château of Bure. Six hundred knights, each bearing the name of William — *Guillaume* — and all the squires and serving-men, as well as the guests at separate tables, all also answering to the name, sat down to make merry at the gay Christmas time. The Court of Normandy, at that time, was certainly not dependent on any English contingent for its brilliancy and numbers.

The chief figure of the time, Richard the Lion Heart, was never seen at Falaise. He contented himself with assigning the town and château to his wife Berenice, as part of her dowry. Richard took more interest in his Château Gaillard than in Falaise. “*Qu'elle est belle, ma fille d'un an!*” he exclaimed, after

the astonishingly quick completion of the first true rival to Falaise's supremacy among impregnable heights.

His brother and successor, John, contented himself with the making of any number of royal entrances to Falaise. No less than five times in the space of as many years did the loyal town hang its streets with carpets and embroidered linen and curtain its churches with rich cloths. Royal as were Jean Sans-Terre's tastes, his luxurious nature felt no qualms when it came to murder. Pale, sad-eyed Arthur of Brittany, who, alive, was a perpetual source of uneasiness to the uncle who had confiscated his estates, spent the only happy months of his long imprisonment within the walls of the château. It was deemed the Falaisians were indeed too kind; the royal youth, therefore, was taken to Rouen. Even there no Norman could be found to do the dreadful deed. "I am a nobleman, not an executioner," had been the reply of the *Sieur Guillaume de Briouze*, when King John suggested to the latter how one whom he had loaded with favors could help him. What no

Norman subject would do, a Norman Duke could and did. In the Rouen Tower by the Seine, where Joan of Arc was imprisoned, John's dagger found Arthur's heart. The dark deed, no sooner done, than it began to breed a darker vengeance. Philip Augustus, the French King, and Arthur's father-in-law, took the surest means of punishing the awful crime. Having, in loyal feudal fashion, first summoned John to appear before his peers at the French Court, to answer for his crime, and John having refused to deliver himself up to certain condemnation, the latter's fief of Normandy was, therefore, declared forfeited — for fiefs, according to laws governing feudalism, were lost by rebellion, felony, or treason. Philip Augustus, at the head of a fine army, then proceeded to make good his sentence. He took by assault not only the Châteaux of Conches, Audely and of Radepont, but also the "saucy castle," the "beautiful girl of a year," Richard's Château Gaillard. Next Falaise, the key of Lower Normandy, was attacked.

Who knows what might have happened had not John been a fool as well as a murderer?

He fled to England, leaving a stranger to head the defence of Falaise; for in outlining the plan of resistance of Falaise he committed the irreparable folly of unsettling the town by giving its command to a foreigner. Falaise, always loyal, and having double reason to remain true to a prince who, however cruel he might be, at least had given to Falaisians their cornerstone of municipal freedom, suffered a quick revulsion of feeling. Incensed at their Duke's disdain, and outraged at being led against their French King by a Belgian, a mercenary, the Falaisians prepared reprisals as clever as they were effective.

For seven days they allowed the King Philip Augustus to spread out his war machinery beneath the château. The French standards flew in a half circle, close to the great walls. And meanwhile Falaise, over her battlemented heights, smiled a malicious, knowing smile. For her citizens, after the seventh day, quietly marched down to Philip's camp, delivering up to him the town and castle. Their recorded reason for the capitulation is rich in meaning: "They liked better to render

up the fortress intact, and to preserve their properties and the liberties of the town than to be Normans !”

Normans had made them; had led them to fight at Varaville against France; had fired Norman greed and ambition to conquer England; and the same Norman leadership had brought from the Holy Land the spiritual and temporal aureole of the crown of Jerusalem to be refused by their Norman Duke. By the very perversity of that fate which seems to delight in mixing good with evil, to this last true Duke, they owed the very concessions and privileges which had made the new word “Liberty” stronger than loyalty, their new rights better worth fighting for than the barren honor of continuing the reign of Rollo’s race on Norman soil.

With this their first assertion of a true independence of spirit, a new and vigorous life begins at Falaise. The new ideal of citizenship had begun to fire the minds of burghers and householders. In the camp before Falaise, *in castris apud Falesiam*, Philip confirmed the charter of the town’s true birth. As French-

men these Normans were to circulate and traffic freely throughout the kingdom—the town of Mantes alone excepted. The “Commune,” granted by John, was thus confirmed.

With the passing of Normandy to the French crown, an entirely new destiny came to Falaise. Hitherto, she had been one of the chief jewels in the ducal crown. As such she had been a town and a castle to be used as her owner willed. Her citizens' and nobles' blood must be spilled, their property at the mercy of pillage or plunder, in battles that were none of their making.

Meanwhile, during all the years of this former feudal servitude, other battles, not fought with the lance and bow, were bringing deliverance to Falaise.

The tanners and cotton dyers, and later the cutlers, working as best they might; forced to fly to the narrower town streets for refuge in times of siege; yet, persecuted as they and their dwellings were by pillage and fire, were they and their commerce growing year by year in power and importance. Against the tyranny of the feudal system, a slow but mighty power



was thus in process of formation. Humble pigs and cattle, the horses, always in demand in a town as constantly at war; and the long procession of the merchants with their merchandise, going up year after year to the Fair at Guibray, — these were the forces arrayed for the battle waged by burghers for freedom and “privileges;” — “rights” these became only when the privileges were once granted. The first great conquest was when, in 1203, Jean Maréchal was nominated “baillif” of the town; hitherto all civic affairs had had to be decided by the military commander or Vicomte of the Duchy. Such was the beginning of those other “rights” that came about with the gradual development of true citizenship, with the institutions of the “Communes,” and “L’Echiquier de Normandie,” the latter a sort of ambulatory court of justice, composed of prelates, abbots, and lords.

Thus we see Falaise emerging from the anarchy of feudalism into that period of transition during which the chaotic forces in society were being resolved into law and order. This small and now almost forgotten town con-

tributed another element to the growth of modern society. If in the tiny bec beneath the donjon the dipping of hides in dye was to bring that wealth to Falaise which made her "rights" worthy the consideration of Kings, on her château plains other "rights" were being fought out. Chivalry, "that eighth sacrament," incorporated the divine principle of individualism; the destructive principle of collectivism, that was the base of feudalism, was to go down before that "winged" shape, even as the dragon writhes beneath the feet of St. George.

Chivalry, in its turn, having served its end, was, later, to meet its first downthrow at Agincourt. Henry V., the English King, had seen the shield of France lowered. With the imbecility of its "wandering" King Charles IV., and with dissensions at home, the foreigner saw the right moment for striking a blow for those lost possessions, the very thought of whose loss made English Kings writhe.

After the nobility of France had gone down before English Knights and Barons, came the turn of towns and fortresses. Falaise was

deemed of sufficient importance to warrant Henry's own presence at the siege.

Of all the twelve sieges sustained by the Château of Falaise, its attack by the English King Henry was the most prolonged and terrible. The town and château were surrounded on all sides by the English troops. The Duke of Gloucester was encamped near Guibray. The King himself held the heights of Mont Mirat.

Hitherto the walls of Falaise had proudly defied catapults and their stone projectiles to do their worst. Now, on the Mont Mirat, a new enemy was to be faced. It was one before which, in a few after years, all walls were to crumble, even as the chivalry of France had gone down before the English troops. Cannon belched forth its balls of fire. And yet, even against this new enemy, together with all the older war-machinery in full force,—for stone projectiles of such enormous size were shot from catapults and balistas that it seemed as if nothing in town or château could survive their continuous rain — yet did Falaise hold out for forty-seven days. Then the worst

of all foes entered the town and took possession. Gaunt-eyed famine imprinted its grim horror on every Falaisian face. And then it was, — with weak and tottering step, its town a ruin, its fair churches a wreck, its walls the very mockery of defence, and its château so battered as to be almost a shell, that Falaise capitulated.

John Talbot, named Governor of the Castle, rebuilt the castle, its walls, and added the beautiful tower that bears his name.

Exactly thirty-three years after, Charles VII., Joan of Arc's pale, wan King, turned to man and soldier by her girl courage, re-conquered Falaise, as he did the rest of Normandy.

## V

This last conquest of Falaise was its final riveting to that rich chain of united French provinces which formed the glorious parure of subsequent French Kings. Once the hated English out of France, and the true welding of the kingdom was possible. Her laws, her government were organized. In lieu of mer-

cenaries, of soldiers of fortune, or of noblemen in pursuit of gain or pleasure, the beginnings of a standing army startled Europe. The "French Chivalry," became the "Gendarmerie Française" and "francs archers" the national infantry. Cannon was perfected. France, in a word was ready for the strong hand of Louis XI.

In the subsequent amazing strides taken by France in the next one hundred and fifty years, Falaise was no laggard. A passive, rather than an active force, she nevertheless added her quota to this evolution of the national character which was to produce the men of the Renaissance.

The very last of her Norman Dukes had given her the charter of her liberty. Her rights and guarantees were the first things fought for in all future articles of peace or treaties of capitulation. The first of her French Kings to make her for evermore a true French town gave her the right, at Guibray, to build the city of the Fair. For the hundred and fifty years after Charles VII. had granted to Guibray "its Halls and Booths," not a single year

had to be wasted; in that long interval of peace, Falaise and her suburb were busy in making themselves as famous as producers and merchants, as they had made Europe ring in earlier days with the fame of their sieges and courage.

To the crude tanneries of the days of earlier Norman occupation, Falaise in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had added no less than two hundred different trades in and about her immediate neighborhood. In some of these industries she was considered unrivalled. Her tanneries were become the best in France. Her cutlery and cloths were also renowned. Her Fair, yearly, brought half of mercantile Europe to prove her supremacy in certain lines by the high prices commanded for her productions. With her famous fortress entirely restored; her Talbot Tower intact; her walls and great gateways rebuilt, and her commerce and Fair in high prosperity, Falaise, during the reigns of her later Valois Kings, was in full flower of success.

Its last siege, therefore, did the town the greater credit. The citizens, though grown

rich, had not lost, in the piping times of peace, that noble courage and strength of principle which wealth so often steals away. Luther, Calvin, Loyola — here were rallying cries new to ears whose grandsires were never wearied of repeating William the Conqueror's great oath, "Par la splendeur de Dieu." Falaisians vowed that no Protestant King, with his hated English mercenaries — the help Elizabeth had sent and for which Henry IV. had waited before attacking Falaise — should ever rule over Falaise. Their convictions were as strong as they believed their walls to be once more unconquerable. There had been fighting between Catholics and Huguenots before this final appearance of the "King of Navarre." De Brissac and the Huguenot Montgomery had had a test of strength of arms and walls in proof of their conflicting religious views concerning popes and the priesthood. De Brissac had won and still held the fortress.

When the white plume of Navarre appeared before the ramparts, followed by the long line of French noblemen and Elizabeth's despised troopers, De Brissac's rage against the hated

heretic flamed higher than ever. Henry quietly took up his headquarters with the Mayor of Falaise. Then he summoned De Brissac to render up the castle. The Count insolently replied that "he really could not, in conscience, since he had sworn not to do so on the Holy Ghost." Also, that for further explanation he would wait six months.

"Ventre Saint-gris!" was the hot-headed King's oath to that answer. "I'll give him absolution of his oath — I will change the months into days!" Thereupon he planted his cannon on the neighboring heights. A breach was soon made in the Tour de la Reine. Henry's soldiers made the easier climb and ascent along the walls, as the pond, the walls' chief defence outwards, was frozen over. Henry's command was to "push forward." The troops were soon in command of the château — the inner living palace. The ruin made of the fortress by the artillery had turned to cowards the hiding garrison. Henry's troopers found no warriors to fight. At the town's gateway, however, a brilliant resistance was encountered. Here the towns-



people, armed and hot with hate, fought like demons.

Two notable acts of heroism aureole this last of the Falaisian sieges with the crown of heroic martyrdom. Two young lovers fought side by side at this battle at the gate. The young man fell, mortally wounded. With redoubled fury the lovely Falaisian girl fought across her betrothed's dead body. The conquerors, touched by so great a courage, tried to save her. But she yielded only to the conqueror, Death. As the fatal ball struck her, she smiled as she reeled, flinging herself, with her last convulsive strength, across the dead body of him she loved.

At another of the gates, meanwhile, the King himself had been witness of as great an act of bravery. A woman, single-handed, had kept the King's troops from entering, by rolling down upon them enormous stones. This woman was thought to be a man, until it was discovered the helmet and armor covered a woman's weaker frame. When led before the King, the interview between a woman like "La Grande Éperonnière" and "Le Roi Vert

et Galant" was characteristic. "Why do you crush my troops, since I am your Master?" "Were I your subject I should defend you. You are my prince's enemy, I must defend him!" (The phantom Prince de Bourbon had been designated as Henry's rival to the crown.)

"*Royale Militaire* — thou art right. I pardon thee. What dost thou wish granted thee?" "That my street be exempt from pillage." "So be it." The news of the grace granted L'Eperonnière flew from street to street. In four hours' time — the time granted for the closing of the street — all the portable wealth of Falaise, its old and young, its loveliest women, and its wounded and crippled, were securely locked within the street du Camp-ferme. The rest of the town and its rich suburbs were then given over to the lawless plunder of pitiless English hands and French greed.

Nicolas de Sassier, however, by his clever, courageous act was soon making the King that famous appeal for the restitution of the Guibray Fair, which concession would be the means, in an incredibly short time, of replen-

ishing the empty Normandy chests and town exchequer.

The last act, before the fall of the curtain on Falaise's demolished fortress and her levelled walls, was a curious one. In the Château de la Courbonnet, the Mayor's Castle, the King sat him down to write a letter. It was to his love, Gabrielle d'Estrées. In it he tells her his movements during the last month :

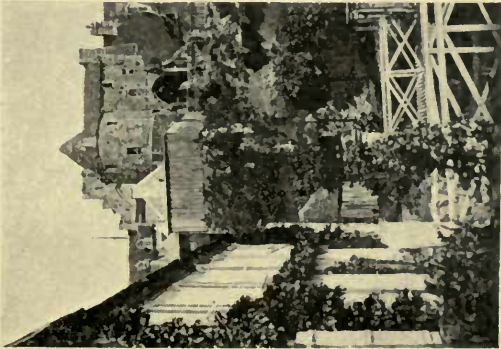
"My soul, since the going of Lyceran I have taken the towns of Sééz, Argentan, and Falaise, where I caught De Brissac and all he had gathered about him of help for Normandie. To-morrow I leave to attack Lisieux. . . . My troops have grown since the departure of Lyceran to nearly six hundred nobles and ten thousand infantry; so that by God's grace I no longer fear anything from the Ligue. I made in a night what I did not think to make in Normandie in a year."

"In Falaise this 8th of January.

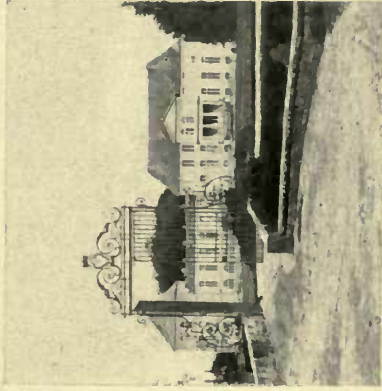
"P. S.—In finishing this letter, those from Bayeux have brought me the keys, which is a very good town."

The true drama of the fortress opened with the loves of Robert and Arlette. The last act closes upon the ruined château and this writ-

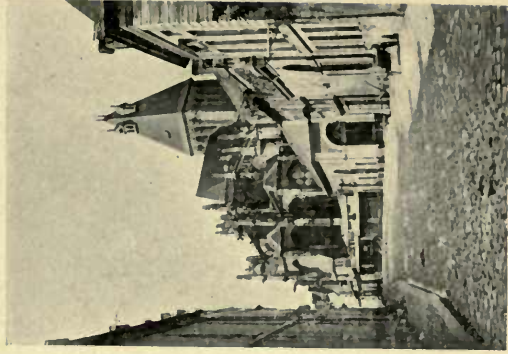
ing of a strangely laconic love-letter of her conqueror to his "amie." Between the two events there had rolled the ever-swelling movement of Normandy's advance toward peace and unity. For thus it is that humanity pushes onward, making the pettier dramas of the Dukes and Kings of a day forgotten incidents in that mightier movement of universal progress.



*Valdante and Porte des Cordeliers.*



*The Château of Versainville  
near Falaise.*



*Apse of Saint Gervais, Falaise.*



## CHAPTER VII

### FALAISE OF OUR OWN TIME

#### I

**T**O be French anywhere, is to be vividly, responsively alive. Falaise, with its modernized streets; with its contented provincial traffic; in its prosperous if somewhat mature aspect of peaceful calm, confirms you in your conviction — should you chance to know French provinces — that in a country so thoroughly vitalized as is France, there are no dead places. Falaise holds up her head once more; she has bound up her wounds; she has nursed herself back to life and health; she now presents herself to you in the almost ideal aspect of a robust, still brilliantly colored old age.

You will find her attraction deeper than any glitter of mere brilliancy. She possesses, in a pre-eminent degree, the subtler persuasion

of charm. Day by day, as you lose the count of days or time in the study of her changeful, expressive features, rich in contrasts, exquisite in their delicate insinuations of all the life lived to form such outlines, you find her power gaining upon you. The charm will begin to work its spell as you wander from church to church; it beckons you onward, to follow among the lovely confusion of terraces, gardens, and narrow lanes until you find for yourself the maidens still going to the fountain in the Valdante; in wanton coquetry, it lures you to climb the heights of Mont Mirat; and it will not rest, nor let you, until, after showing you the state of its fine châteaux and broad ancestral acres, your capture is completed, once it snares you beneath the cool and shade of its tree-domed ramparts, close to the shadow of its great white fortress.

## II

The churches of Falaise, you will find, are as varied in their presentment of architectural features, as has been their history. For an



appreciative enjoyment, indeed, of the ecclesiastical architecture of Falaise a certain knowledge of its history is essential. There are few places where one can carry from house to house, or from church to church, the scenes in history with so little fear of the shock of disillusion as at Falaise. Nature is here the first and most loyal of allies. What man has wholly, or in part destroyed, nature, with an almost tropical exuberance, has restored and beautified.

In the first walk I shall ask you to take, to see the oldest of all the churches at Falaise, you will find nature so altogether enthralling, that the church at the end of the walk will take a merely secondary place. Out from the Place St. Gervais, you turn from the modern-named street Victor Hugo, down the more ancient Rue de Brebisson, to what remains of the noble tenth-century gateway, La Porte le Comte. This gate was the first to sustain attack in case of an assault upon the castle from this side. Unaided, relying upon its stout bastions and high towers, the formidable gate repulsed and held at bay many an army,

its deeds of prowess second only to those that aureole the château's history. Its destruction dates from the latter end of the last century. Its archway was found too low for the passage of loaded haycarts. The feeling of irritation at such vandalism was still strong upon me, as I felt the cool breezes of the Valdante.

The quick precipitation from the life and thickly-built streets of Falaise to the lap of the charming valley, was detectable to both eye and nostril. As I climbed the low hillside, the houses nesting in their odorous gardens were in conspiracy to make the pursuit of old stones, built into lines of beauty, seem a waste of vision. For there was the glitter of the tiny river, sparkling through waxen peach-blossoms, and there was a brighter lustre still in the eyes of the girl who, beneath the snows of an apple-tree, was holding a swathed babe, as if standing as a model for *a Virgin and child*.

The lovely little edifice that suddenly confronted me was amazingly in keeping with that picture beneath the apple-blossoms. The building was of no great height, yet it gives one the impression of an immense dignity.



*The Norman Church of St. Laurent.*



Its flight of twenty-three steps lent it the pose of a statue well placed upon a suitable pedestal. In the midst of the flowery frame of shrubs and verdure, this old chapel of St. Laurent, set high upon its rock, recalled those still older Eastern temples built in the heart of woods or gardens.

This venerable Norman chapel is so genuine an antique that age has ceased to produce its effect; some centuries ago, weather, the sun, and frost had each had their turn in softening certain features and roughening others. The last effect produced, is one of a most delightful harmony—in gray. The rude and simple Norman front, with its two tiny, Gothic upper windows, as after thoughts, are unified by the grayish tone of the façade. In spite of the inevitable restorations and whitewashing, disfiguring processes, there is a convincing simplicity in the Norman nave, in the old walls with their herring-bone masonry,—the best of all signs of their true age,—and in the primitive buttresses and deeply recessed windows. St. Laurent is indeed no architectural impostor. Its very chimes have the accent of venerable

age. As they ring along the valley, there falls upon the air a village sabbatical calm; the worn silvery bell-notes seem to be telling you the secret of their longevity.

### III

To be close to the Valdante, and not to make the tourists' devout pilgrimage to Arlette's fountain would have been an incredible folly. Equally foolish did it seem to leave a view, whichever way one walked, that grew in beauty and glory. So magnificent in breadth and extent was the prospect, as I drew the closer to the Château de Mesnilriant, that there seemed no effusions of enthusiasm left for merely historical sites.

To drop downwards from intercourse with sunlit clouds into the heart of a mediæval village, was one of those contrasts we Americans count on as the reward of our journeys. I think, if the truth were told, we also count upon a certain amount of suffering from the smell and dirt, rarely inseparable from such well-authenticated middle-aged streets and

methods of sewerage. These sufferings are something to which everyone will listen, in sympathetic disgust, when effusions over architecture or views fall on deaf ears.

In the Valdante, you will have the middle ages in your teeth. It is impossible to believe either houses, or customs, or smells, have changed in some hundreds of years. The walk into the valley, should you take it from the bridge over the moat, just beneath the glistening façades of the Château de La Butte, will be a composite assemblage of the old and the new. The thickly built hillside to your left will present to you as remarkable a collection of old houses, gardens, and terraces crowned by brown walls, out of which grow trees, and here-and-there the great curves of a bastion—as you may hope to see this, the French side, of the Alps. There was an Italian coloring, and something also of that close family intimacy in both houses and inhabitants, in the little street that, quite suddenly, running at right angles across the lane, I found to be the chief Valdante thoroughfare.

In this narrow thoroughfare there were no

sidewalks. The low houses were close to the street; centuries old they looked and were — these quaint, crooked little houses. There were stone seats, worn into hollows, outside of many of the houses; there were deeply recessed windows, small and narrow, to which glass had come as a surprise; there were lunettes, still unglazed; and wide doors, nearly as wide as the stone huts, through which cows and haycarts, for generations, have passed. To the left, as I followed the road, there was the glitter and the ripple of the tiny rivulet that has played such a great part in history. Nothing more friendly and companionable could be imagined than the river and the road. Together they twisted and turned, the one between ferns, grassy banks, and bits of garden stretches, while the latter carried its antique collections of houses along with the comfortable wandering gait of a country lane.

Here, as everywhere else in Falaise, the spring had come as the most generous of decorators. All the Valdante was in bloom and blossom. From every window-ledge there was the glow of the deep-eyed pansy, or roses in thick clusters, or the splendid pallor of the



lilies we call Easter. Gardens there were close to the river, about some of the richer ivy-grown fourteenth and fifteenth-century houses; the hillside above was one vast garden indeed, where the lilacs splashed their white and purple sprays over the yellow broom, and stately chestnuts carried their red and white blossoms as if each were a heavy candelabra.

The old women who were warming their bones in the sun, along the river, were the color of shrivelled mummies against this May bloom. A young mother, hushing her babe's querulous cries, seemed, rather, to have borrowed the glow of the springtime. Everywhere urchins and children were romping and playing. The Valdante was as noisy as a school-house playground. Above all other sounds rose the buzz and whirr of the cotton-spinners. Not a house but had its whirring figure mounted on the round of the circular spinning machines. The men's faces looked out, across their window gardens, through tired eyes, as they swayed their lean, ceaselessly-moving figures about their half-knit jerseys on the frames. Old women, also, were

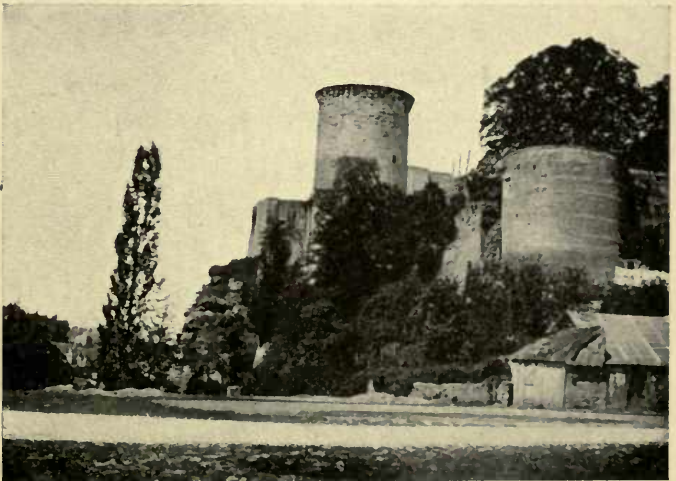
spinning; their wheels were brought close to the door. This older, antique method left no sting of compassion. "Que voulez-vous, Madame?" one of them answered, as I stopped for a moment of talk. "In one's youth — *quand on est jeune* — one scorns such old-fashioned trades. But when one is old — without eyes to see well, or fingers to move easily, or legs to walk, the wheel is a good friend." I left her, feeling the richer for the old woman's philosophic content in her toil.

Arlette's fountain at last!

It was only a deep wide hole in the wall, as commonplace a well as one could imagine. A look upwards, however, and the commonplace ended. The château was rising up aloft with an immense majesty, it was true; but the castle was also astoundingly neighborly — there was no question of that. It was almost impossible, I should say, to conceive of a grim feudal fortress being on a friendlier footing with a humble valley, that is, the Château of Falaise with the Valdante. In its fiercer, war-like moods, a bowman of even average skill with the bow could have lodged his arrow



*The Corniche of D'Aubigny*



*The Walls and Bastions of the Fortress.*



here below where he willed. Why might not a lover's eye have covered the distance?

As if to make the historic flight backwards the less arduous, across the little river was a tannery. Its colors still stained the bank and tinted the running stream as they have through so many a century. The odor of the bark was thick upon the air. A tall strong figure emerged from the tannery, the man's reddened arms and stained boots the color of dried blood. Neither the scarlet arms nor the deeply dyed apron affrighted the child, a girl, who, with blond curls streaming in the wind, ran forward to the scarlet arms opened wide to receive her. "Papa! Papa!" cried the childish voice, in its lisping liquid French, "*Viens* — the soup is on!"

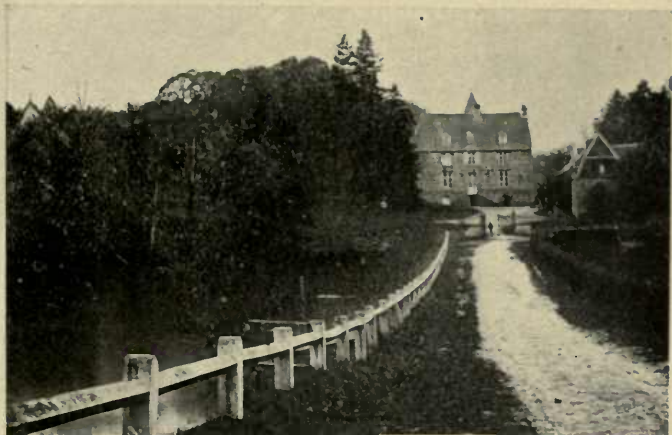
I cannot tell just why I found the homely scene at once touching and reassuring. Verpray, Arlette — Robert — those historic personages were no longer remote, phantasmal; they were you and I, the child yonder and its stalwart father, all of us who repeat, generation after generation, the same old, the ever-young, eternal round of human love and human toil.

## IV

In making the further tour of the churches of Falaise, one is confronted with the most eloquent of all proofs of the vicissitudes of the town's history. There is not in all the town a single sacred edifice that can be called entirely Norman. William, the master-genius, and Odo, his great ecclesiastical half-brother, builder of Bayeux and designer of the famous Bayeux tapestry, left at Falaise no worthy monument of their building era. William's sagacity was hurtful to his birthplace. His intuitive instinct, with true Viking prophetic vision, foresaw the future importance of Caen. There, where large rivers ran, close to the sea, great cities grew. He built, therefore, his two Abbeys at Caen.

Falaise's natural advantages had determined her rôle. She would be and would continue to be, a magnificent cliff-fortress. As a town, she would play a secondary part in the history of her time. Such was William's view.

The chapels, therefore, that grew, under the pressure of the eleventh century's new-born



*A Small Château near Falaise*



*"This way, my friend."*





passion of building, into churches, were all parochial churches. They never aspired to become cathedrals.

The oldest of all the churches in town is, to be entirely accurate, just out of it. That legendary investigating goat that summoned, by its cries, the gallo-Romans who then owned Guibray, to view its discovery of the statue of the Virgin, was its true founder. The chapel, rebuilt later by Mathilda of Flanders, was the Norman successor to that primitive shrine. The fine choir and rounded apse which were beautiful examples of a still later Norman, are now encased in the so-called embellishments of the eighteenth century. It is needless to add, these attempts have resulted in disaster. The older noble Norman choir has entirely disappeared. Instead, there is a meaningless circular recess, at the top of which are two huge unsightly windows, the whole supported by shallow pilasters.

The strength and simplicity of the Norman nave, the rough primitive transepts, and the noble Norman door with its rich carvings, are, however, expressive examples of the great Norman period.

This church is intimately associated with two early queens, both of whom lived much at Falaise. Mathilda's pride in the church, at whose dedication she and her husband both assisted, must have been at its height when this new church of Guibray, in common with all the other churches of Falaise was given, with all its tithes and rights of burial, to the church of churches for Mathilda, her own Abbey aux Dames at Caen. The ladies of the abbey held all the livings and revenues of these churches until the Revolution.

The dim features of Berenice, that romantic bride Richard of the Lion Heart married in Sicily, illuded and yet pursued me, as I walked beneath the Norman arches.

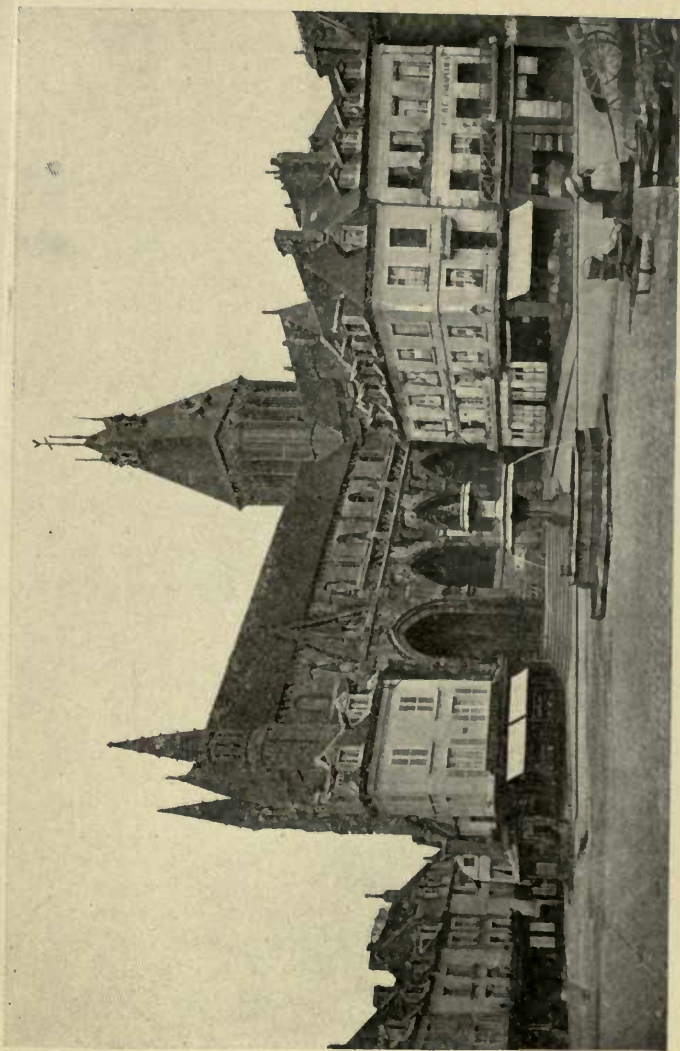
A far more vivid, human, and admirable memory was a half-hour spent in the presbytery of Notre Dame de Guibray. The flutter of a priest's robe at the gray door of the high garden wall reminded me I had, so to speak, a friend at Court. In an incredibly short time I was made at home in the presbytery. The curé, his mother, and young sister, and my genial friend the Abbé, all lived together in a

charming seventeenth-century stone house. The presence of the dignified *mère* gave a note to the home life one rarely associates with a priestly interior. It was not alone the house I must see, but the garden, where, day after day, winter and summer, the two priests did their walking as they said the office of the hour or talked over their parochial duties. It was a pleasing memory I carried away with me,—this of the two stalwart priests, with their intelligent, expressive Norman features, set in the frame of their sunny, blossoming garden; and also of that and many other stirring chats about churches, Falaisian history, and the men of old and modern times.

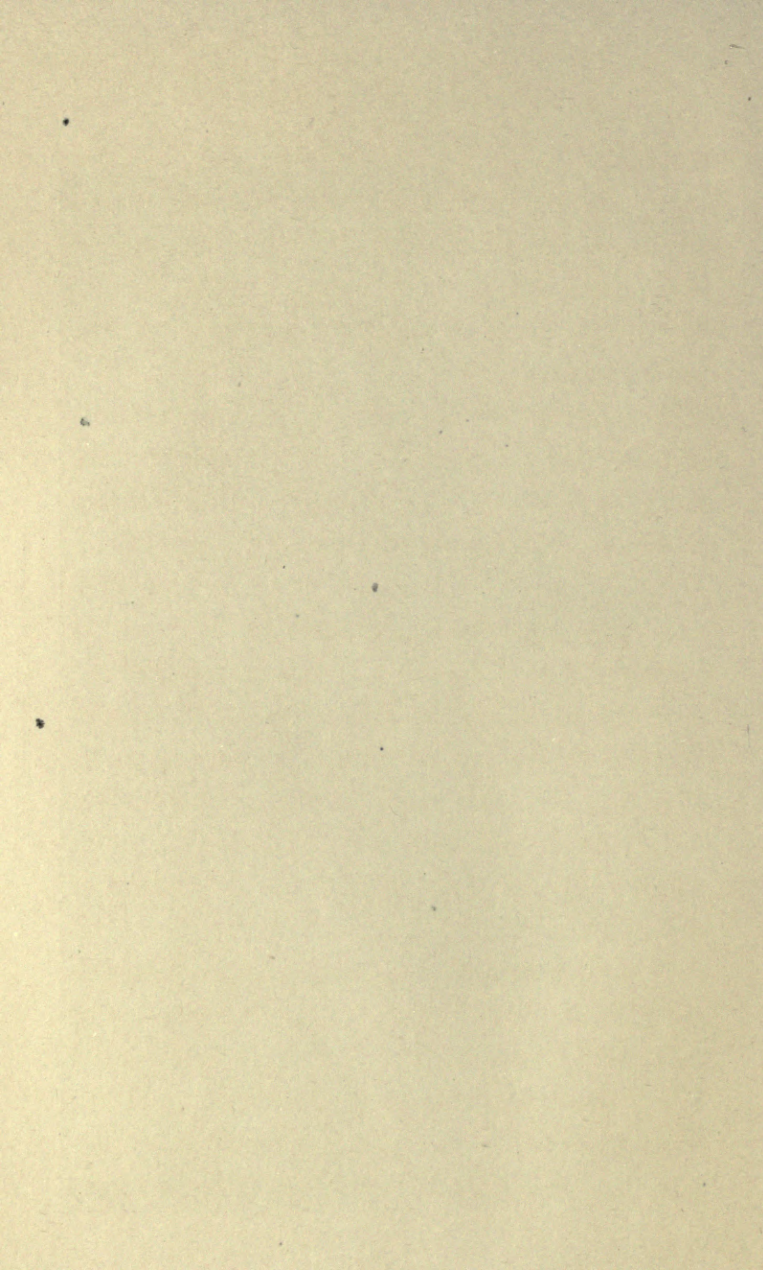
## V

One feels the Square of Saint Gervais, at the end of the Rue Argentan, to be the heart of the town. Long, irregular streets grow out of this centre of the mild provincial stir and traffic. In spite of the obviously modernized houses, the Square, in the language of the studio, composes well. It possesses the first essential of the paintable quality: its lines are irregular, yet harmonious. It presents also a great variety of perspectives rich in color-schemes. The Rue des Cordeliers ends in the brown bastions and the outer rickety stairway that make of the once stout La Porte Ogier a favorite playhouse for the children of the neighborhood.

The chief ornament of the Square is the rich Norman-Gothic Church of Saint Gervais. Its beautiful Norman tower rises above the modernized house-fronts, with the dignity of an older, lordlier day. For centuries, however, so far from the building standing as one apart from the humble houses about it, the church had taken shops and meaner



*The Church of Saint Germais.*



dwellings to its bosom, so to speak. These incrustations were still disfiguring the sacred edifice when I last saw it. The restorations now going on have in view, however, the removal of these unsightly reminders of the walled town.

The earliest beginnings of Saint Gervais were in that *Chapelle Ducale* which was said to have faced the house—*le Manoir de Guillaume*, in which Arlette, his mother, and Verpray, his grandsire, lived. Freeman will tell you William was born in this house on or near the Square. Nevertheless, to those who prefer the more picturesque theory of the Conqueror's first cradle having been in the narrow castle chamber, for such there is the circumstantial proof that the babe was baptized in the Church of St. Trinity, the parish church of the château.

It is significant of William's interest in this part of the town close to his house—or to that of his mother's—that he should have given the ducal chapel to the town. As the town, however, in these earlier feudal days possessed no communal rights, the Duke reserved

to himself and his heirs all seigneurial privileges. The chapel was immediately rebuilt into what must have been the noble Norman structure Henry I. saw consecrated in 1134. Of this edifice we have remaining the fine central tower and one entire side of the nave with its side chapels. The other side of the nave is Gothic. The effect of such an astounding mixture of styles in close juxtaposition is, of course, fatal to unity and harmony. For those essential elements of beauty one must turn to the exterior. The late Gothic and Renaissance of the choir, with the richly crocheted flying buttresses, pinnacles, and the elaborately carved parapet, form an architectural *ensemble* of great distinction.

For an effective contrast in ornament, I know few churches offering so many interesting examples as Saint Gervais. The rude, grotesque figures and distorted features of the eleventh century, in the capitals of columns in the Norman nave, face the refined traceries of the Gothic. Rough demoniacal gargoyles grin and leer at the serpentine curves of beautifully carved salamanders on its exterior.



Some further pleasing relics of antiquity are to be found in the side chapels of the Norman nave. To associate pleasure with a review of tombal effigies and armorial frescos may seem a curious taste; yet there survives in us all something of that old ancestor-worship which delights in any record of the dead. In the little side-chapels of Saint Gervais are black bands encircling the shafts of columns; on these bands the arms of the D'Aubignys and other famous Norman names shine in dimmed heraldic splendor. In the tombs beneath one's feet the figures in outline, costumed in rigid quaint garb, are those of Norman Knights and their ladies.

Of the Square as Henry IV., as François I., as Charles X. saw it, there is little left, save the Church, of the *Place* that was the first to welcome its Kings with the pomp and splendor that made the royal entries of Falaise famous.

The "whispering neighbors" of the many gabled windows in the narrower, less modernized streets, will lead you toward that part of the town that grew up about the fortress. On your way thither, you will stop to look across

to the swimming heights of Mont Bézét framed in the door of the old gateway — one of two still standing — now known by the name of *Les Cordeliers*. Its older name of La Porte d'Ogier le Danios has a far greater significance for modern ears.

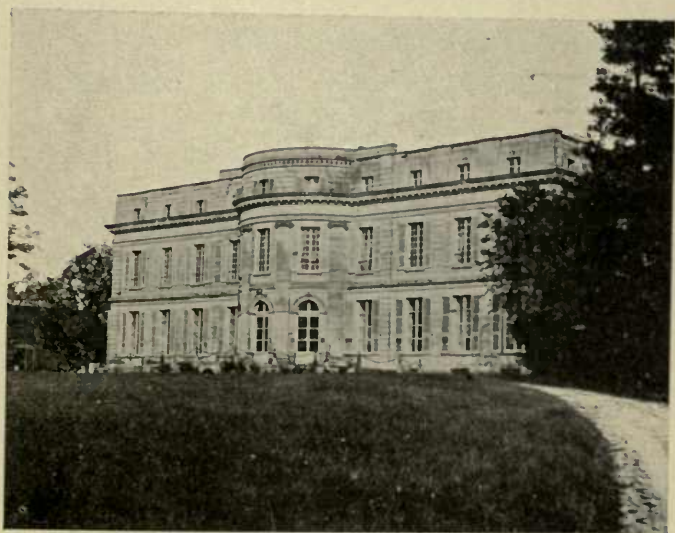
A part of the gardens of William the Conqueror's "manoir" were given to the convent of *Les Frères Mineurs*, known as *Les Cordeliers*. In time the gateway took the name of the brothers.

The monumental state of some of the older house walls and façades recalls the many abbeys and convents which here, as at Caen, Bayeux, and Rouen, must have made those mediæval towns seem one vast conventual city, interspersed by a few churches, dwellings and châteaux. Falaise, from its earliest Norman days, was a very devout Catholic indeed. Its cowlèd monks and hooded sisters were even more numerous a body than were, in times of peace, its soldiers. Hospitals, convents, a home for lepers, — with these and the numerous abbeys was the town crowded.

At the other end of the town, overlooking



*The Church of Sainte Trinité.*



*A Chateau in Town.*



the Valdante, you still may see the left wing of the ancient House of the Templars. The first appearance of these "Chevaliers of the Temple" at Falaise, was in 1170. When the over-rich templars were sent to their dreadful death in 1309, their estates were divided — their Falaisian property sinking later to the level of a printing-house.

In the quiet Square of Guillaume-le-Conquérant you may still see some of the state of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century town. As if brandishing his successes in the teeth of this Falaise of the Bourbons, the Duke William, astride a huge stallion, in theatrical pose, waves aloft in the centre of this Square, his knights' banner. This equestrian statue, with the six Dukes of Normandy, in their mantles and armor, guarding the lower pedestal, seems to fill the tranquil *Place* as with a noisy presence. The figure of the Duke belongs to that period of French sculpture when frenzied action was mistaken for the subtler principle of rendering movement through repose in which action is suggested rather than tumultuously expressed.

The true jewel of this Square is the Church of Sainte Trinité. A beautiful triangular chapel fronts on the Square. One enters through a charming porch in full Renaissance bloom. Although there are earlier Gothic features in the church, the structure, as a whole, recalls that florid style Hector Sohier made so popular. There are portions of Sainte Trinité that are like the fragments of a palace. The richly decorated Renaissance porch is one such fragment; another is that portion of the choir beneath which is tunnelled the enchanting passage-way leading from one old street to another. The magnificent Renaissance buttress, with its carved pinnacle, close to this vaulted passage-way, is a monument in itself.

The character of the Place Guillaume Le Conquéran is distinctly eighteenth-century — as is indeed much of the town still left, after the vandalism of the last hundred years. For the Falaise up to the time of the Revolution was still a wonderful little town. Its streets were then lined with richly carved gabled houses; its six noble gateways were then still standing. To realize the immense style such

gateways give to a town one must go nowadays as far as Bordeaux. The fortress was then in ruins. The walls, however, both about the châteaux and the town, were almost intact, with many of the turrets and towers in perfect condition. The old moats already had been converted into the smiling gardens and orchards that grow beneath our feet, as we stand, nowadays, on the bridges that cross them. The innumerable sixteenth and seventeenth-century châteaux, that still give their note of stately distinction to Falaise, were then at their very prime of luxury and grandeur. The convents and abbeys in and about the town were also in full enjoyment of their privileges and prosperity.

When Falaise, therefore, saw fit to offer a King its homage, it had the means at hand of presenting that homage with magnificent state. The royal entry offered to Charles X., when, as Comte d'Artois, he passed through the town, is recorded as one of unusual splendor. Churches were decked in banners and rich cloths. The triumphal arches were as numerous as they were gorgeous in color.

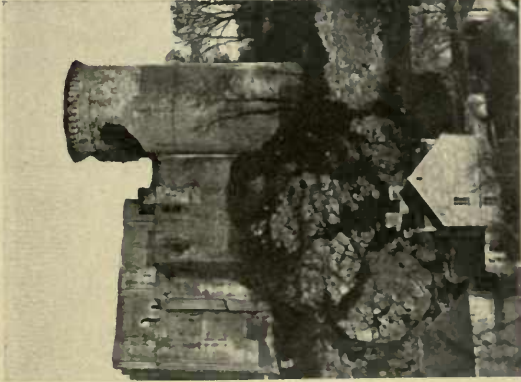
The town had robed herself in superb cloths and stuffs of her own weaving. To the processions that went forth to meet the future King, the Seigneurs lent a state no *cortège* of Republican France now commands. The coaches were the coaches of fairies, as decked with plumes as a duchess's bed. The gold and silver-wrought vestments that glittered on the backs of priests and archbishops would bring fabulous prices to-day in the antiquity shops. To the splendor of ecclesiastical and court ceremonial was added the richness of robes worn by judicial and civic authorities; and the very crowds that lined the streets, in their gay and picturesque costumes, made a blaze of color unknown in our more practical, less poetic age.

For Napoleon the Great, Falaise, in the exuberance of its admiration for this new conqueror, had prepared its best welcome. The châteaux of the neighborhood, forgetting their hate, were generous enough to remember only the gracious laws of hospitality. Napoleon was to be the guest at the Château de la Fresnay. The town had prepared a triumph





*A House in the Valley.*



*The Fortress and Talbot Tower.*



as elaborate as it was to be costly. But between the courtesies of the Valois and the Bourbons, and the brutal indifference of the great Corsican, there lay the great dividing line which has marked the distinction of the Old Régime and the newer order of no manners and a great haste.

Napoleon found no time for the eating even of the elaborate banquet spread for him at the château; and still less for the nonsense of a "royal entry" in a remote little town. The naïve Falaisians sent to proffer him the town's welcome, in song, beneath the château windows, received a characteristic Napoleonic treatment. "*Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille?*" the beloved national air, was sung to ears that even in gayer moments had no taste for music. The touching suggestion to the idyl of peace to be enjoyed in the family circle, was perhaps unfortunate. Napoleon had as much use for the joys of either the family or the national bosom as he had for peace. The singing Falaisians were "bidden to stop." As they, in their innocent ignorance of the new order of things brutal,

still continued, Napoleon yelled out to his guards, "Do your duty!" It is recorded of the unfortunate musicians "that they retired in great confusion." The town had only the debts of the royal entry that never came off, to pay in souvenir of this disgraceful action of the "sovereign of the people."

Little wonder they "danced gayly" when the Bourbons came in, dancing in the squares, in the streets, and in the suburbs. For three long months their songs and shouts of joy succeeded the groans and tears Napoleon's cruel wars had wrung from almost every Falaisian home. As in the first delirium of the freedom promised by the Revolution, Falaise then had given herself up, in common with all France, to the excesses of the age of reason, so in this restoration of her ancient Kings, she celebrated her rapture with the ardor and intensity characteristic of her nature.

In Republican France, the Carmagnole in the open streets has been superseded by balls given by the Mayor to the People, in Town Halls.

Yonder, across the ramparts, as we peer



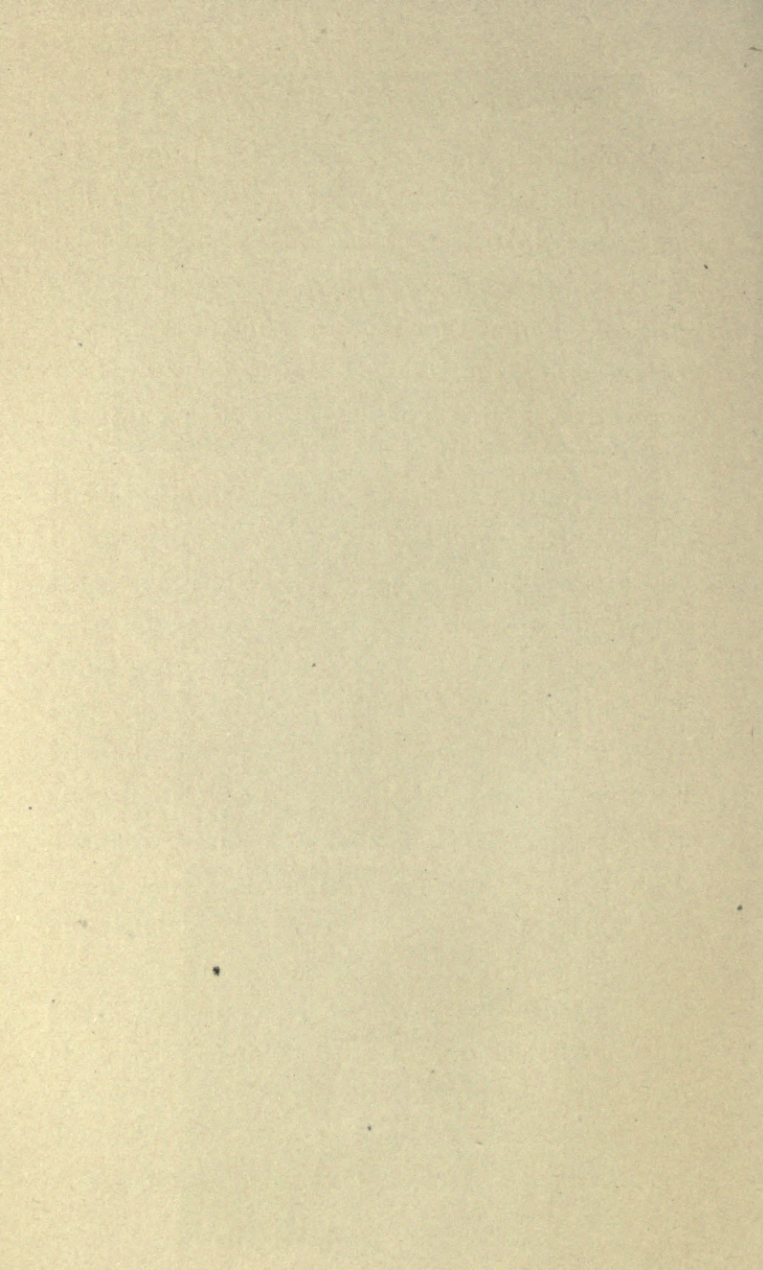
*A Street Scene.*



*Across the Caen Plains.*



*The Square of St. Gervais.*



below into the peaceful vale where browsing sheep and sleek cattle have succeeded the swans that floated, in times of peace, in moat, and pond, we seem to see, as through a mist, that host of men that have fought, during the long centuries, the battles that have made the People free.

THE END









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