AUTUMN HOLIDAY
ON
FRENCH RIVERS
J. E. MOLLOY
OUR AUTUMN HOLIDAY ON FRENCH RIVERS.
HOLIDAY ON FRENCH RIVERS

BY

J. L. MOLLOY

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY LINLEY SAMBOURNE.

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1874.
Dedicated

to

The Right Honourable George Denman,
One of the Justices of the Common Pleas,

by

James L. Molloy,
The Middle Temple, Barrister-at-Law, etc. etc.
PREFACE.

A Preface to a work of travel, except as a "raison d'être," seems almost unnecessary; and as in the present book the opening chapter has exhausted all explanation, we might have been content to dispense with further introduction.

But the happy reminiscences of such a "holiday" as "ours," induce us to express a hope that, while interesting to many, it may be found worthy of repetition by those who have health, strength, and experience to appreciate a trip beyond all telling the most enjoyable.

How enjoyable, this six weeks of ours, none but Gyp and we four can ever know! If we could only hope to enlist but a small reflection of the sympathy (without the astonishment) that greeted the "Marie" in the large
towns and quiet villages we passed, we should have less hesitation in sending our little boat on this her second and more perilous journey.

J. L. M.

1, Elm Court, Temple.
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OUR AUTUMN HOLIDAY ON FRENCH RIVERS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION—THE TEMPLE—THE THAMES BY NIGHT.

A room in the Temple, overlooking the river, and within sound of the little fountain! The first cool breath after a day of intense heat and languor, coming up with the night tide—stealing through the open window, and lingering in the fragrance of a huge tankard iced à raviir.

"Cools the air, you know," said the owner of the rooms, as if no other motive for its raison d’être had occurred to the austere simplicity of his habits.

It was near the end of the season, and a few men just up from circuit had dropped in, and were discussing projects for the Long Vacation. Some were for the moors—others the Mediterranean. Ashantee was talked of—in fact every possible country and way of doing it. Some proposed a steam yacht for a cruise on the Belgian canals, while others scorned it, and were for knapsacks and thirty miles a day. Two were for swimming the principal rivers
in Europe; and a little knot more Arcadian, were for hiring a waggon, decorating the interior with every comfort—hammocks, drowsy rugs, arm chairs, silver teapots, slippers—and perhaps bring their own cow, to milk on brandy of a morning by way of tonic, and so play at gipsies for two months of lazy luxury in the Devonshire lanes.

Leaning out of the window, we watched the gold, red, and white lights beginning to twinkle on the bridges, and the flickering lantern of a solitary barge, that looked ghostly in the indistinct light, as she dropped under the arches to her moorings. It had been more than usually sultry, and we could see the heat that had hung all day long in a thick haze over the dead water, roll back in sullen waves before the crisp breath that crept up fresh from the sea, with the flow, leaving the water as it passed breaking in ripples of laughter in its sense of relief.

"Tell you what," said one who had not seen the Thames by night, "it looks awfully well—doesn't seem the same river, somehow. Wonder what's become of the wretched warehouses and shot-towers that straggle along the poisoned banks, and the general impression of mud?"

"All that dies out and vanishes with the daylight," answered a voice deep in the shadows of the room. A quaint, half sad voice, dropping off dreamily at intervals, and at times strangely muffled, as though he had been a
ventriloquist and let it wander inside the tankard. He went on. "The night is compassionate, and veils the unattractive and repelling; you lose the offensive details, and gain a shadowy outline of singular—" Something or other which faded in more ventriloquism. "Look at those wondrous coloured lights; you can scarcely distinguish the bridges, and they give the effect of being suspended in the air, and beckoning you on to some unseen garden fête. The Thames is unpleasant by day, but at night almost poetic. It is larger and vaguer, and quite looks like water, not unfiltered mud. The most crystal lake could never give a deeper reflection of those stars than—" Here we lost him, for a man broke in, "What a night for a pull! Everything on the river asleep but ourselves!"

The notion caught us, and in two minutes we had passed through the Temple Gardens, crossed the bridge to Searle's, found the night watch not in the least surprised at our wanting a boat, jumped into a four, and had an exhilarating spin over a couple of miles. It was like champagne after the languid inaction of the day; and when we pulled up for an easy, some one said how pleasant this would be on a foreign river, say the Seine or Loire, all the novelty of fresh scenes—at this very time too, after a long day's pull, and wondering where one could put up for the night. We drifted a few minutes, and then said Stroke,

"Think I'll do it!"
"Do what?" said he of the tankard.
"Take an outrigger up the Seine!"
"That's very kind of you!"
"Not in the least, will you come?"
"Ah! well, I don't know. It's hard work, you see, and I doubt if I'm stronger for anything beyond grouse. Dare say you'll find lots of fellows to jump at it. There's C— and M—, Wingfield and Diamond men—the very people. Done that sort of thing already, though not in an outrigger. Know too much, probably. They rave about it, say it makes your arms so brown, and then the appetite! But it's getting chilly here:—nasty draught through those arches. Shall we swing home and talk it over? Are you ready, &c., &c.—? Row all!"
CHAPTER II.

THE CREW—THE FIFTH MAN—THE HELMET—THE "MARIE."

It was so late in the season, and the principal oars that one knew, had so long formed engagements, that no slight difficulty was anticipated in getting five men together to form a crew. And there are conditions almost imperative for such a tour. A certain proficiency in rowing—an exquisite temper—and not only capability, but a decided love for hard work. But as good fortune would have it, before three days passed four out of the five had accepted. The first, than whom a better fellow never rode across country, or was death on rocketers, we found on the steps of the "Junior."

"Come? My dear fellow, I shall be only too delighted. What do you think I've had to fall back upon for excitement? Spending my nights inside the dome of St. Paul's, looking out for some new effect in sunrise, and killing the sleepless hours by catching stray pigeons through the orifices."

Two came from the Temple.
The fourth was unearthed in his studio at Uxbridge. Hesitated a little at first; said he was not a brilliant linguist.

"Haven't seen an Ollendorf since Eton: and then never spoke a word. Can't go on asking them how they are, all day, can I? And I only know one other question, 'Avez-vous rencontré le lion dans le jardin?' and they might think that odd perhaps!"

There remained but the fifth man, but each of the four begged the other three to give themselves no concern on that point, as he could find a dozen fellows that afternoon. But the afternoon passed, so did days, then a week—a fortnight and no fifth man. It grew serious. We hunted the clubs, sent urgent messages all over England, wrote to Tours, and telegraphed even to Dresden. Nothing but excuses. "So sorry, my dear fellow, but wife ill again, and sea-side on duty, and that sort of thing, otherwise nothing he would have enjoyed so much." "Was shooting in Scotland, and reading hard in France!" And the worst of it was that, counting for certain on his arrival, we had ordered his kit with our own. Straw hats and jerseys were put by for him in Bond Street. Savile Row was uneasy about his measure and trying on. Burlington Arcade thought his hair should be well singed before starting, both on account of the climate, and for a certain mistrust of provincial coiffeurs. He had his own maps and guide books, and in fact we ran
up little bills for him on all sides. But we only knew him as 20 per cent. of the expenses, and put him down in the list as X.—and certainly there never was a more unknown quantity.

We even ordered him a Pith Helmet.

"For," said one of the crew, known hereafter as No. Three, "without pith helmets the expedition will collapse. Why? The heat, sir! It's deadly! I know it! There's nothing like it in England. It begins with sunstroke and glides into paralysis of the brain!" And then he drew such a touching picture of the Helmet, as at once proved, that with it Bengal would be a desirable place to dream away the rest of our days. We decided then and there that no earthly consideration would induce us to leave England without the great heat destroyer. We looked round for a maker.

"I know a fellow," said No. Two.

No. Two always knew a fellow, under all circumstances, and in connection with every possible subject. The most hopeless difficulties were at once reducible, through means of his enormous acquaintance. If he didn't know a thing himself, he knew a fellow who did. You might innocently suggest something about which no one knew anything—the North Pole, or "the broken bottles on top of the Great Wall of China!" Not a bit! He would be quite at home. Difference of time was no difference
to him. If it was a thousand years back, it was all the same. *He always knew a fellow!* So under his guidance we sought a great Helmet Professor, and ordered six. Five for the crew and one for Gyp, of whom more anon. We tried on some, and found it a little discouraging:—and then the operation of being measured (a patent of the Professor) was not pleasant; your head was inserted in a wooden box (like an infernal machine), and myriads of darts like the fangs of the devil fish fastened on you. I think it phrenologised and measured at the same time. And then we pictured how it would look in the boat. This decided us, and even Three relaxed a little in his stern enthusiasm, and when, on the eve of departure, we found the Professor had not yet completed the order, we experienced what must be akin to the sensation of waking from a nightmare.

On the subject of the boat there was much consultation. We had been advised to take an inrigged craft with plenty of beam and carry a tent and sail. But beyond the ambition for a little novelty, we wanted all the pace we could get, knowing there were 300 miles to commence with against stream—for we had settled on rowing up the Seine, and so finding our way to the Loire. A new four-oared outrigger was therefore ordered from Messenger.

"Very well, sir!" said an old oarsman, "you can do as you like, but I happen to know something of the Seine!"
There is such a thing as a barre, that swallows vessels—where'll you be in that?"

But we were loyal to the "Marie," as we afterwards christened her, and liked her from the time when the first line was laid, till the delicate ribs grew under the skilful hands, and her beautiful proportions gradually developed. Teddington was a bright place to run down to, and smoke many a meditative pipe over the building of the little ship. One day a lady came down, and looking at the boat, keel uppermost, said, "Well, I hope it will never be seen like that on the Seine!" We had good reason to remember her words. When finished, she was 40 feet in length, 2 feet amidships. Broader than necessary, but it gave additional strength and a better floor. Messenger said he would turn out the best in England, and to judge from his satisfaction, we concluded he must have kept his word. She was certainly worthy of him, and once in the water looked thoroughbred and speed all over. "Many words about a boat," some may say; but it will be easily understood how one grows attached to even an inanimate thing from long companionship and good service. Her little flag was of dark blue silk, "Marie" lettered in gold. It faded to the palest, and had many a rent and tatter before the cruise was done. We had no opportunity of trying her in English water, for the finishing touches were not yet put before we left.
We decided to carry in the boat nothing but the absolute change that was necessary, and send on the luggage from town to town. There was the most pleasing unanimity on the point, till we came to examine our things on the eve of departure—when the accumulation of pet luxuries would have swamped a much larger craft. Bow's "little things" alone, being two dressing bags—a very large and heavy artist's ditto—a portable armchair for sketching—a sun-shade—and a portmanteau. There was of course an instant reduction. Stroke and Two shared an invention known as the "Land and Water Bag," which was nothing more than a waterproof bolster. We heard of it accidentally from C——, who had used, and was enthusiastic on its merits. "The great compressible of the age! Holds as much or as little as you like. Fits the shape of the boat. Waterproof? Throw it overboard and tow it for a week! Are you cold at night? Put your feet into it, and there you are! Better than a life preserver! Saved M—— from drowning on the Danube. He clung to it when all other hope was gone, and sate astride it over a rapid. Do for a morning tub if necessary!" But Bow and Three scorned its "form," and went in for Russia leather and silver fittings. No matter! A time came!!!

Nothing now remained but the fifth man. The only intelligence we had, was in a letter from F. C. B., who
said, that a gentleman known in 'Happy Thoughts' as "our well informed friend," was studying the "theory of rowing," had borrowed his chest expanders, and might possibly join us before the conclusion of the tour. On this we finally gave him up, and resolved to start à quatre.
CHAPTER III.

GYP!—OUR PASSENGER.

GYP was our dog, and generally alluded to as a little wonder! a pure black and tan, and a perfect, almost rare specimen of his kind. A beautiful head and points. He could do anything! Hide an apple or orange in any room of the house, and where you liked, he was sure to find it. The ordinary places of concealment, ladies' pockets and coal scuttles, Gyp only laughed at. It was pretty to see him hunt. A short sharp bark as he was sent out of the room, knowing as well as you, what was going to happen. Say you put the apple on top of the highest picture, or in the globe of a lustre! In came Gyp, not uttering a sound, as he beat every corner, sniffed at a scuttle en passant, looked in at a pocket, found the scent was above, not below, gave one little whine of delight, and finally stood trembling on his hind legs, his little neck outstretched, and his nose straight to the apple. Singularly enough he loved the water, and would spend solitary hours diving for stones. His passion for stones was ruining his teeth, and
undermining his constitution. It was often embarrassing to the crew, for he would, under some sudden inspiration, take a header from the boat in one of his diving fits, and nothing but getting out, and wading or swimming after him (which he gloried in) would induce him to come back. He was of a most affectionate nature, and not to have taken him with us would have broken his little heart. He became greatly attached to the crew, but chiefly to Stroke, whom from the first he took possession of, almost equally with Bow, who was his master.

It may be as well possibly for a few, to explain, that "Bow—Two—Three—Stroke" indicate the places occupied by the crew in the boat. Bow, rowing number one or bow oar, followed by Two, Three, and Stroke, so called from giving the stroke to the boat. Bow was our artist. His delightful talent, without which these rambling reminiscences would possess but little interest, was even less an acquisition than his happy disposition, his unselfishness, and singular gentleness and good nature. Two—an excellent fellow, and charming companion for such a trip—for he would have rowed on to the end of the world, and stared the most hopeless difficulties out of face with endless laughter. Three we have already seen in connection with St. Paul's and pith helmets. The fifth man was to have been coxswain and spare oar.

At last the "Marie" was finished. Messenger took her to
Southampton and saw her safely on board. Two and Three went with her to Havre, and were accompanied by a Hertfordshire squire, who took great interest in the cruise, and in the fortunes of the little boat. Indeed the latter occupied a far greater share of his anxiety than the safety of the crew. For, meeting him later on at Rouen and telling him of an accident that had befallen us, and which might have proved fatal, he exclaimed with honest emotion, "Well, thank God she escaped!"

Bow, Stroke, and Gyp went round by Folkestone and looked in upon Dover, both of which places greatly depressed Gyp. He thought them melancholy, and wondered why the inhabitants developed their sadness, in rushing to the boats that came in, to see if there were any more wretched than themselves. But then a short, too short hour and a half, on a breezy, rollicking bridge, and what a change!
CHAPTER IV.

BOULOGNE—AMIENS—HÀVRE—THE CREW MEET.

The most delightful old town, if none but French lived there! Even as it is, with its *grande rue*, and the beautiful fish-girls from Portel, what sunshine it has! To call the Etablissement, Boulogne, and Boulogne the Etablissement, is not to know the *grande rue*. The Etablissement could be built anywhere. The *grande rue* does not happen twice. Such a bright link between the old town and the new! Wandering up the hill from the Rue Napoleon, rich in soft colours and pleasant shops. Past the sunniest of flower markets and the faint perfume of peaches and apricots. Past the old church of St. Nicolas, where Guilmant used to play the organ in the dusk, and the echoes stole through the stained windows—played it too, as somehow one only hears the organ played abroad. Up to the top of the hill, where the graver and more solemn part of the street turned under the solemn archway of the old town, and the wilder and more reckless half dashed on into all the mad merriment of the brightest fair in France.
And I had forgotten the old guardhouse that nestled under the walls of the stately church, and the little sentry-box. Not many though who were there will forget the grey sergeant who smoked those wonderfully-coloured pipes, that were the envy of all English schoolboys in Boulogne—the same boys who from Lady A—’s windows opposite would rain showers of snowballs on him of a winter morning, while the old fellow would only laugh, and mutter under his great grey moustache, “Sacré plaisirerie de Grande Bretagne.” The last time we saw him was one bitter morning during the war. He belonged to the one regiment that the Prussians dreaded at close quarters—cried to for pity at Bapaume, and saluted when they took a prisoner—the grand, gallant 20th Chasseurs. They were six times cut to pieces during the war, and six times the remnant came back for recruits and went out again. This was their last. They had to go out in the night, and make their way through a forest of Uhlans to Amiens. He was bidding the boys good-bye, and telling them he would never again see any snowballs come in at the little door. He pointed to his heart: “Il y a quelque chose là, mes enfants!—et enfin—six fois—c’est bien assez!” Some of us, for we went with them, saw them come down the grande rue that night. The old half-laugh on their boys’ faces, and singing, as if no Krupp’s guns and ten times their number were waiting for them, an
old Breton song, "Il était trois petits enfants," with a wild refrain that haunted one long after. And as they passed the church they saluted, still singing. He looked up at the windows opposite the guard-room, but the boys were long asleep. He loved the little fellows, and missed them, and he was never to see them again. A look up—a half wave of the hand, and the regiment went by, and in a few minutes the echo of their singing died away on the bridge over the Liane. When the street was deserted, and on the spot where the troops had passed, something lay on the ground. It was a little grey kid-glove! Was there a story in it?

Three months later, after the awful rout at St. Quentin, the last battle fought, a handful of the regiment, in rags and naked feet, crawled into Douai, but they were all strange faces, and the great grey moustache was not amongst them.

There were so many things, both in Boulogne and in the villages round, that called up a host of thoughts and incidents of the war, that one would have liked to linger over the old scenes again. But time was inexorable, and so after two days of long swims out to sea, dainty breakfast at the restaurant on the beach, a lazy hour in the Etablissement listening to the music and watching the great floor polisher in an ante room waltzing in time to the pianoforte accompaniment of one of the crew—another
swim just because it was high tide—dinner—the long smoke on the wooden pier in the soft warmth of a summer night

—and then, ah! the tearful recollection, those heavenly pommes de terre frites, at the little shop in the rue Siblequin, at the back of the theatre—we were up at five to catch the early train to Amiens, en route for Havre.

Poor Gyp! had he been a man-eater from the wildest jungle, there could not have been more commotion about him. Bow, in the innocence of his heart, thought to take him into a first-class carriage. When the door opened, Gyp (most unusually for him) barked furiously.

"Ah! mon Dieu, quel horreur de bouledogue!" said a lady, shrinking into a corner with a little shudder and
cry! Bow began to explain that the dog was the quietest little creature (he still kept on barking and showing his teeth).

"Ah! mon Dieu, mon Dieu! enlevez-moi ce misérable bouledogue!"

"Il n'est bouledogue," said Bow indignantly, "il est——" but a staff of officials came up, and insisted, though with extreme courtesy, that the animal should travel in the dog-box. In vain Bow expostulated and offered to take a passenger's ticket for him,—"Impossible, Monsieur—nous sommes désolés—mais——" But a further indignity remained. A heavy-looking German had a huge slobbering hound, and fearful for the safety of his pet, insisted that Gyp should be muzzled. The rage of Bow! "But I haven't got such a disgusting thing," he added triumphantly, and as he thought conclusively. But the guard produced some cord, and in a minute Gyp was emmuselé, and consigned to the iron cage. Poor Gyp! who was never separated from his master, and slept on the same pillow.

Not till we arrived at Amiens did Bow recover his spirits, and then for a moment he almost forgot his grievance in admiration of a delicious head-dress that shaded the sweetest of faces. But presently out bounded Gyp, half frenzied with delight, and expressed his emotion in rushing to the street and bringing back all the big
stones he could find. And for the rest of the journey we hid him under our rugs, and with the aid of a friendly guard, and sundry francs, he enjoyed the rich Norman country from the window. At Rouen we caught a glimpse of the Seine, looking under a strong wind decidedly "chippy," and a certain amount of white foam.

"You don't mean to say we're going to row in that!" said Bow.

"Ah, monsieur," said a propriétaire, who was in the carriage, and would answer Bow's French in English, "you have right, a naufrage will to happen last week, and what you call vapour—steam brig—go down. He is a sea!"

"Messieurs! vos billets, s'il vous plaît! Oui, Monsieur, le Havre!"

"Look after Gyp, Bow! Wrap him up in that rug as we pass the barrier!" But at the gate there was a stifled growl. The collector looked down. Bow coughed. "Je rhumer beaucoup,"—you would not have thought so, to look at his brown, healthy face, but they let us pass good naturedly, and we jumped into a fly. "I feel as if we hadn't seen the other fellows for ever so long a time," said Bow; "it'll be quite jolly meeting again. Wonder what the fifth man'll be like!"

"What! you think they've got one?"
“Sure! Two knows such a lot of fellows! But, hallo! where’s my chair? Here! stop, _cochon_!" The driver was furious till we explained. But the chair was not at the station. It had been left at Amiens, the fault of the head-dress. And for the rest of the tour, the same chair was with us on an average not more than two days a week.

No rooms at Frascati, though we had written expressley, and worse still, no crew. It was too late to look for them in so large a town. We dropped into the first vacant hotel, and there to our satisfaction we found Two and Three in the middle of dinner. "So glad you’ve come! but where’s the fifth man?"

"What, haven’t you got him?" we asked.

"And fancy," said Three, "nine telegrams to England since we’ve been here, and five answers. It’s expensive, I know, but Two suggested so many names! It’s an awful bore, and what are we to do? We’ve just been looking at the mouth of the river, and there’s a regular sea on. I almost think that fellow was right about the outrigger—the fishing smacks were dancing like corks. And the ‘Marie’ has arrived, and is on board. Stood the voyage beautifully, and the Squire took wonderful care of her, only he’s gone home again ill."

"Thinks he was poisoned at Southampton," said Two.

"_Potage pour Monsieur?_"
"Yes, you'll find it excellent," said Three. "Carrots and onions—delicious!"

"I don't quite see the connection with the name though," said Two; "potage à la petite Fadette! Ah! I know a cook——"
CHAPTER V.

FLORENCE—BOW TAKES A LESSON IN OLLENDORF.

Dinner was over at the Hôtel de l'Europe, and we were sitting in the cour outside the salon. A cosy, chatty place, shaded with ferns and large plants. Bow and Ollendorf deep in conversation with a very pretty and interesting French girl, to whom he had been particularly devoted during dinner. The mother, a charming old lady, dozing in gold spectacles under an acacia.

Three nodding deliciously over a drowsy cigar.

Stroke trying some very old conjuring tricks, for a cluster of prettily dressed children, who invariably found him out, and detected the bonbons up his sleeve.

"Will you come and talk with me?" said one of them to the baffled prestidigitateur—a little girl of not more than nine years old, a strangely winning face, and dressed like Dresden china. Very soft, fair hair, the nose slightly retroussé, and the walk of a little queen.

"As if she owned all the place!" said one of the others.
"There is my pet seat, under that niche where the roses are. I've had it all to myself since we've been here, and I never invite any one!—you are the first."

Stroke followed, wondering at the innocence of her childish face, and the manner so far beyond her years.

"Are you going to stop here long?"

"No! we leave, I think, in two days!"

"Ah! and not see Ingouville, and Honfleur, and Etretat?"

"But we haven't the time. Suppose you tell me all about them instead?"

"Oh! but it would take so long! Ingouville, you know, are the great heights near here, and it is the view that is so beautiful. If you go, you mustn't look behind you till you get to the very top, and then, ah! mon Dieu! And Honfleur, that is the other side of the river. Where you see the sailors come in from the long fishing, and make pilgrimages with naked feet, or on their knees, to the little church on top of the hill. I'm sure you would like Notre Dame de Grâce—not a big or grand church, you know, quite tiny, but such a forest of little vessels hanging from the roof, all made by the sailors; and prints on the walls—poor prints, mamma said—perhaps only a few sous, but they refuse nothing, and an old fisherman told me there was a story in every one of them. There was one, the toy of a dead child. I'm
sure there was a story in that! And then—but perhaps you're tired?"

"Tired? Tell me about Etretat!"

"Well, at Etretat, when the tide goes down, the laveuses and blanchisseuses come with their baskets, make little holes in the shingle, and then springs of fresh water bubble up through the white stones, and they wash the linen on the very spot where the sea had been. And do you know why? Ah, well, many many years ago there was a river, and it flowed close to the beach and into the sea. And one night there was a great storm, and a poor woman with her little baby, knocked at the miller's door (I forgot to tell you there was a mill) and asked for shelter. But the miller was a bad man, and he refused. And she went on her knees, and begged for only a piece of bread for the little one, and he swore at her and shut the door in her face. Then she rose, pointed to the mill, and said the bon Dieu would not forget. And the next day there was no river, and the mill and the miserable had disappeared. And oh! there is such a beautiful cave, and they call it the Trou de l'homme, and it's all white inside and silver sand. But no one has ever gone to the end of it. I didn't try, Mamma wouldn't let me! And there's a big arch at the end of the cliff, and the sea, when it is angry, tumbles through it with such a noise. And I went to the bal d'enfans!
How do they dance in England? Because there is an Austrian officer here, and he said it was _un jeu athlétique_, and that it made them very hot. And you're going up big rivers in your little boat? I should so like to come with you!"

"I wish indeed you could! But there! _There is a better seat for you!_" And lifting the little elf in his arms, Stroke placed her in the niche among the flowers. "Oh! and you have only known me since dinner!"

"But that is a long time, and now I see more of you!"

"It's nice, talking to you," she said. "You understand me. So few do! And I like you!"

"And I," said Stroke, "am almost in love with you!"

She shook her little head. "_Pas de danger!_"

"How can you tell?"

"I can read something else in your eyes!"

"What's your name?"

Stroke told her. She clapped her hands.

"I shall call you Jimkins! Why do you laugh? Ah! you don't know! I had a little dog from my English _gouvernante_, it was _his_ name, and he was just like that little one in my sister's lap." Stroke looked over. There was Gyp, another auxiliary to Ollendorf, and far more invaluable to the _tête-à-tête._

"And what is yours?"
“Florence! Do you like it?”
“I love it!”
“Ah! you said that very differently!”
Then half to herself, “J'en étais sûr! See, there's your friend with the glass in his eye, looking for you. And do take me down. Look at la petite mère laughing!”
“Ah! ma fille, quelle drôle d'idée de vous poser comme ça!”

In burst Two. “Think I've found a man! in fact I know a fellow who'll steer us up perhaps to Rouen—just the thing,—so dangerous a part of the river. Don't you think you'd better all come and see about it?”

“Yes, you three go,” said Bow. “Le cinquième ram-mer!” he explained to his pretty preceptress. We hadn't the heart to interfere with such devotion to literature, but knowing Bow, we foresaw many stoppages on the cruise if similar opportunities for improving his accent presented themselves.

“You're coming back?” said Florence.
“Soon, I hope, little Dresden!”

“Then I shall go to the flowers and think of more stories. À toi,” kissing her hand, “et à tout le monde. Sans adieu!”
CHAPTER VI.

ON BOARD THE REMORQUEUR—THE MUSICAL PILOT—HIS PORTRAIT.

The last effort to secure a coxswain added one more to our list of failures. A fatality haunted Two's acquaintances, and his last discovery, an American who had promised to come, changed his mind at the eleventh hour. Then looking across the seven miles of bay and noticing the uncertain aspect of the weather, we determined finally to adopt the advice of "Le Général" Cambronne, head of the pilots—put the "Marie" on board a remorqueur, and take her from the open sea into smooth water. We were told the steamer would start in about three days. But the next morning, when we were quietly in the middle of breakfast, news came that the captain was under orders to start in half an hour, and that if we were not ready in that time, he would be obliged to leave without us. The exertion was almost superhuman to pay the bill, pack the luggage (which was in a state of delicious confusion), rush to the steamer, and put the "Marie" on board. We had to carry her on our shoulders through the principal streets
of Hâvre, half-a-dozen English sailors, and three times the number of Frenchmen, generously helping. It was a Sunday (August 17th). To say that the entire town followed, that the *gamins* whistled and cheered, that the women looked from the windows wondering, that it was awfully hot under a scorching sun, the weight of the boat and the entire luggage, would be a faint outline of our progress. It must have looked like an aquatic travelling circus. But the courtesy and kindness of everyone was charming. A host of things had been forgotten at the hotel, the bill amongst others; but there was quite a rush of volunteers to do everything. Arrived at the quay, the excitement was brilliant. The *remorqueur* (under high pressure) was losing the tide, and would have started but for the *avant-courriers*, who ran on and told them we were coming. Then the difficulty of lowering the "Marie!" How she was not broken in two is a mystery. Every one
had a rope. There were enough to lower a frigate! A
breathless pause, as she was hoisted and hung trembling
in the air, before anyone had time to remonstrate, and
a long "ah!" from the crowd as she glided safely on board. Stroke and Two
struggled after her; steam was up, the moorings cast off, and then—Three and
Bow nowhere to be seen. The captain was frantic:
"Mains, mon Dieu, avec des gens comme ça, c'est impos-
sible!" He sacré’d every possible animal under the
sun. Bound to be at Rouen by a certain time
—and the loss of every minute might mean stick-
ing on a sandbank—he could stand it no longer,
and gave the word to go ahead. At that instant the
huge crowd opened like
two big waves, and down the living alley came Bow and
Three, running at the pace of the last 100 yards in a mile.
"Les voilà qui arrivent!" laden with loaves, cheese, bottles of wine, two gourds of cider, and provisions enough for all on board. We had quite a game of cricket, shying and catching the things from the quay. "How's that, Umpire?" "Sacré nom de——," shouted the captain; and, hanging on to the wall as best they could, Three and Bow swung on board. A wild cheer from the crowd, answered with a will from the crew, a rather sad smile from the little face that had found Ollendorf so interesting, and we steamed out of the harbour. "Courage, mon ami," said a pilot to Bow, "on revient toujours!" "Oh, oui! je connais," said Bow—but there was a sigh!

There were two pilots on board—one at the wheel, another going back to the station at Quilleboeuf. The former, honouring the tradition, would not speak at all; the latter never ceased: and if a type, represented a singularly intelligent class. Every inch on the river is rich in historic souvenirs. He knew them all. He had been taking the waters if you please, at Carbec, a small village on the Vilaine, which rises in a wild valley not far from Honfleur, and flows into the Seine. "Une source merveilleuse, Messieurs,"—attracting crowds of invalids. Not that he had been ill—no, Dieu merci!—he had been to see his fiancée—Félicité—"un parfum de jolie fille." "Eh bien! had we seen Tancarville? No?—ah! monsieur is
an artist—let him prepare—*vous allez voir!*" And after a short hour's steaming we came in sight of a headland of huge rock, rising perpendicularly from the river, overshadowing and dwarfing the village at its foot. On its summit the two castles of Tancarville—the old château on the terrace formed by the cliff, which has a triangular shape of unequal sides; the other, a modern building, running parallel with the Seine. Beyond, a dense forest, forming a magnificent and sombre background to the old battlements. "Voilà, Monsieur, the old home of the Tancarvilles, Melun, D'Harcourt, Dunois, Tour d'Auvergne!" He had stories and legends of the *Tour du Lion, Tour du Diable, Tour Coquesart.* Knew all about the English burning it down under Henry V. None of us would venture on a date in his presence. Master of the situation, he was far more interesting than any guide-book. And the last of the Tancarvilles fell at the battle of Agincourt, with seven princes of the blood. It was sold by a Tour d'Auvergne to an Englishman; then became an hospital; and finally came back to a descendant of the Montmorencys. But this was only an introduction to a flood of history which he poured on us, relating to every place we passed. Talking of "Robert le Diable," he glided quite naturally into Meyerbeer's music, and hummed several of the airs. "Did we go to the opera?" *c'est nom,* he never missed a night, when he was off duty and at Hâvre. Thought the music a little hard
and unsympathetic; what did we think?” all the time looking over Bow’s shoulder as he sketched. “Ah! if Monsieur would only give him one scrap, pour la petite là-bas, what a present for her on her fête day!” Had the pilot known Bow for years, he could not have appealed to a more tender point. Of course Bow would be charmed, and it would be pilot’s portrait. Off rushed pilot to make un peu de toilette.

“Ah! mon Dieu, if he had only known this, he might have seen the coiffeur.” He was bewildered with delight, told every one on board, dived into a bucket, borrowed a comb from a pretty-looking woman who was going up to Rouen with baskets of peaches and apricots, went through a whole scene from “Robert,” and was at the service of Monsieur. The crew grouped round the artist and model, and to beguile the time we opened our provisions, and improvised a pic-nic under umbrellas, for the heat was so great, that we had to cover the
"Marie" with tarpaulins, to keep her from blistering. We had a general lunch, and the peach and apricot market was anticipated long before the little woman reached her destination. All this time a little steamer, that had shot out from the opposite shore, was creeping fast upon us, and nearly alongside. There was a faint struggle for a race, but we were passed. Pilot's *amour-propre* a little wounded, especially before strangers. But he took revenge, held the sketch up on high, and shouted, "*Ah! vous ne faites pas ça chez vous—allez!*"

And so we drifted on till we came to Quillebœuf, where
we had hoped to lower the boat and pull on ahead of the remorqueur. But the captain had already lost too much of the tide and could not stop.

It is here that the barre is most dangerous.

When the sea comes up in what is called vive eau, and driven by a west wind, a mass of water is hurled into the bay in the form of a wall rising to five and six feet high. The elevation of the banks and the downward current of the river compress and intensify its fury. The noise, which comes like thunder, is heard forty minutes in advance, and in time to give the alarm from village to village. In the winter it is a wall-torrent of water, sand, earth, gravel and foam, that sweeps through the houses, hurls vessels against the quays, and is utterly resistless. Before steam-tugs, wrecks were frequent and most disastrous. And it is in consequence of this, and the dangerous and intricate navigation of the river, that the pilot station is of such importance. The kings of France were members by right of birth of this corporation, so highly were their services esteemed. Our friend mentioned this with not a little pride. He bade us adieu here, but begged us to write to him, and send some notes of our cruise.

The river narrowed a little as we came to Villequier, a pretty village framed in charming scenery—a handsome Gothic church and pretty-looking houses stretching along
the banks under wooded hills, with an expression of wanting to follow the Seine. We saw it too at its best, for there was a regatta going on, and the place was alive with people who had come down from the hills. The river laughing with brightness, the steadiest old barges had quite a coquettish look; white Norman caps and gold earrings glancing about in small boats.

"Nice place to rub up your Ollendorf, Bow!" said Two.

"Well, I have heard the Norman accent is very pure," answered he.

"Yes! they say mouch-wear and bid you bon swear."

"Ah! but they do it so nicely!" It was beyond doubt tempting to stay awhile, especially as there would sure to be a dance in the evening; and already, we heard the murmur of an ophicleide coming from the bank. But we were past the village before we had made up our minds, and a sudden bend of the river shut out the picture.
CHAPTER VII.

CAUDEBEC—OUR VOW TO TOUCH NOTHING BUT VIN ORDINAIRE—THE CURÉ—THE FISHING-BOATS COMING BACK FROM SEA.

It was time to lower the "Marie," for we were nearing Caudebec, where we were to stay the night, catch the tide next day, and row half-way to Rouen. A pilot coming alongside took our luggage, and then, with two planks acting as a lever, our boat for the first time touched water. It was the perfection of a glorious day—the last, by the way, we were to have for many to come. The bay made by the bend of the river was lit up with the gold of an evening sun, and the water was like glass. We drifted a little way, let the remorqueur go on ahead, and Stroke sculled in quietly to Caudebec.

The people were coming out from vespers, and as we hauled the "Marie" on shore, we were the centre of a large and wondering throng. Their admiration of the boat was something to witness, and full of enthusiasm. She was called a meuble, a meuble de luxe, and follement belle. We made a little mistake about the hotel, accepting
the first offer that was made to us, and actually going into
details about the dinner. Not till we dived into Murray
did we find that the hotel, which we were particularly
anxious to go to, was a little further off. We made our
excuses under the circumstances as best we could, Two
explaining to the crowd generally that it was the other
house our friends always went to. Down came a troop of
servants from the right place ("L'Aigle d'Or," I think), and
having seen about dinner, we thought it would be a
good opportunity for trying the boat. A wild-looking
young gamin volunteered to coxswain us. He was a little
timid, seeing so little between himself and the water, and in
the first half-dozen strokes he would have given a good
deal to get back, the shoot of the boat being something new
to him. It seemed to take away his breath, for he had
never been on anything more rapid than barges. But when
the first surprise was over, his delight was very great, and
his excitement, when we flew on top of the current in a
finishing spurt, was most amusing. He was quite the hero
of the other gamins, for a daring and recklessness that,
envy as they might, they did not care to emulate.

"I should awfully like to piquer my tête," said Two; "so
cool and refreshing before our acquaintance with that duck
I saw in the kitchen."

"Not possible, my dear sir," said Three; "look at the
people all over the place, and miles down the banks."
“Pardon, Messieurs,” said a gentleman watching our lingering look at the river, “it is permitted to bathe anywhere you like!”
“What, here, in front of the town?”
“Sans doute, Messieurs!”

We had one costume between the four, and drawing lots for that, we took in turn a delicious plunge.

“Hé donc! les étrangers savent nager,” said a gathering of small boys.

“Oui dame, et on parle notre langue!”

“L’Aigle d’Or” was comfort itself and cleanliness—sanded floors and a kitchen that gave you an appetite every time you passed through; old-fashioned rooms hiding away from one another, and running up capricious staircases that made pretence of wandering ever so far, but stopped unexpectedly short.

“Jolliest hotel I was ever at in my life,” said Two, who always found the present the most delightful; “and oh! do look at that face under the trees! Tell you what, I should like to marry and settle down here. In fact, I knew a fellow, and he never regretted it. Who’s got the spare towel? How the poetry of that duck steals up the staircase. Wonder what the wine’s like?”

“By-the-bye,” said Stroke, “if we mean to avoid extravagance, I vote we stick to the wine of the country—tout ce
qu'il y a de plus ordinaire. No one drinks anything else abroad, and the saving is enormous."

"Besides," said Three, "so good to row on!"

"Light and healthy," said Bow.

"And the best I ever tasted!" It was charming, the solemn unanimity with which it was resolved that there should be no consulting wine-lists, but a rigid adherence to cheap Bordeaux!

We strolled out after dinner and had our first good look at Caudebec. It was the pause between day and night:—and the soft half-light that loves and lingers longest on the water, stole upon the little town with soft reflection. A long quay led into a terrace of singular beauty, fringed with elms and skirting the water's edge. The enormous breadth of the Seine, and the distant hills, gave such bigness and grandeur. Screened from the river by the terrace stood antique houses, where houses stood a thousand years ago—at the time that Caudebec was, as it is now, the most important town on the Basse Seine. This spot was the favourite resort of Joseph Vernet, the great landscape painter, not only for the actual subject, but for the inspirations the place suggested. The suggestion of the moment was that it looked like the first and very pretty scene of an Opéra Comique.

A picturesque and antiquated town on the lower Seine. Spire of Cathedral rising above the tops of the houses.
Evening:—boats drifting by on the river. Music in cabaret on left.

Groups of peasants sitting under the trees. Fishermen lying about.

Four strangers disguised in simple blue and white, evidently wishing to escape observation. The shortest and fairest of the four (a foreigner by his accent) nodding to the country maidens, heedless of the remonstrances of his companions. No; he will not be restrained. He seizes his pencil, and insists on having that dear little Norman face in the wonderful cap. Scowl of jealous lover at Don Juan. Angry murmur among the crowd. They dash their beards with lemonade, and advance threateningly. Situation critical! The three in despair! Ah! happy inspiration! They touch (with simple grace) their foreheads significantly—smile mysteriously at the crowd, and glance at the reckless artist! The gentle superstition still lingers among the villagers, of reverence for such affliction—he is saved! The portrait is presented to the appeased lover, who, scornful of expense, at once orders eau sucrée for the company! General reconciliation—village dance in sabots—chorus!

We met the Curé, a tall, dignified, and most courteous old priest. He begged we would pay him a visit before we left, when he would show us the church, which he spoke of as a bijou of Gothic architecture. We promised to do
ourselves the honour, and being too dark to explore, we wandered into the "Club," which was represented by a very small room at the top of the house, and a billiard table of such size, that the balls, not noticing in the least how or where you hit them, strolled over the cloth through one or two old-fashioned grooves and at their own pace.

"I never saw anything so startling as the grandeur of this moonlight—never anything so rich. It's a pity to waste a good cigar—let's go out and enjoy it."

Two of us wandered for some distance down the river. After some time we came upon a little church, called Barre-y-va, sheltered by rocks, and in the midst of trees. A group of women and a few men were round it; one or two with lanterns. They were waiting for the fishing smacks that had been out to sea for some months and were now coming up with the tide. They always met them at this point, for it was the sailors' church, and filled with their votive offerings. It was a very pretty scene—old and young women, mothers, wives, daughters, one or two old men, long past service, and a few children. Late as it was, some were working, and one old man, by the light of a lantern, was carving a little toy ship. It was exquisitely done, and we offered to buy it. "Je vous remercie, Messieurs," he answered, "c'est pour Notre Dame,"—touching his cap, and glancing at the little hermitage. It was all he had to offer perhaps,—but how many days of loyal work went with
it! But he accepted gladly a real Havannah cigar, and declared when he finished that he never knew what tobacco was before. "Je croyais être à Paradis," he said, quoting from the legend of St. Nicolas. Then after a little silence, came over the water the sound of singing—distant, and then nearer and nearer. It was the Ave Maris Stella, to a wild beautiful cantique,—

\[ \text{Ave, maris stel...la} \]

and after a few bars the women answered, as the boats came out of the shadows, and up to the little church,—

\[ \text{Dei Mater Alma.} \]

This was their greeting.
CHAPTER VIII.

CAUDEBEC—THREE HELPS THE PERSPECTIVE—THE OLD STREETS AND HOUSES—WE LAUNCH THE "MARIE"—OUR START—OUR VOW TO GET UP EVERY MORNING AT FIVE—GYP FILLS THE BOAT WITH STONES—"BEEL!"—JUMIÈGES—THROUGH RAIN AND WHITE MIST—THE HILLS—FRESH EVENING—MARKET BOATS GOING UP TO DUCLAIR.

A long swim gave us a grand appetite for breakfast, and showed too what a stiff stream was in store for our day's pull. The Curé met us at the church. It was even more beautiful than he had led us to expect. It was here that Henri IV. said, "C'est la plus belle chapelle que j'ai jamais vue." Solid, massive, and of unique grandeur. A spire of over 330 feet, and a square bell-tower. Elaborate tracery of fleurs-de-lis. A soft, rich colour in the interior from a handsome rose window, and some stained glass of the 16th century. The side chapels very remarkable. In one of these the tomb of the principal workman, who, devoting his whole life to the church, died as it was finished. The Curé told us there had been a very handsome rood-screen, and a sculptured canopy, but of which no traces now existed. He also said that people
remembered the entire country round Caudebec being one vast forest—the only evidence now being clusters of old trees round isolated farmhouses. Round about the church the streets are a wealth of interest for artists, so many antique wooden houses still unchanged. Bow borrowing chairs from every door he passed, till he found the right spot.

"You wouldn't mind standing just at the entrance of that old street?" he asked Three; "it helps the picture and the elevation, and puts a little life in the foreground. Just as if you were looking up the street and delighted with it. Only you must keep your head up—and if you'll talk to Gyp without looking down, he'll stay by you, and I can get him in."

"But I can't possibly see him if I keep my head up in this way!"

"O yes you can—look with your eyes, but don't move your head now—that's beautiful."

And Bow went back into the shadow of an old doorway, and was comparatively unnoticed. But by degrees one or two boys came round Three, and were evidently puzzled at his fixed stare. Then more people came out from their houses—and finally a little crowd. They followed the direction of his eye—looked over his shoulder.

"Mais dame! qu'est-ce qu'il y a donc?" but could
see nothing to attract such rapt and motionless attention save a very old modiste stitching at an upper window.

"And I'm getting the most awful crick in the neck, straining after this irrepressible animal. He's brought all the stones in the street, and wants me to play with him. I'm sure these people will think I've got a fit—can't possibly put it down to enthusiasm after three quarters of an hour. And now they're wondering what I'm talking to myself for! And there's a vacant baby in the middle of the road rapidly mesmerising me. Do finish, Bow, if it's only to prevent that old woman thinking me so rude, staring at her!"

"You've all chosen the wrong street!" burst in Two. "There's a bit at the back of the church—never saw anything like it in my life!"

And it was worth our coming to see. An old picture, hidden away from the world, and dozing in the murmur of a water-course that crept between the houses. I forget the name, but an exquisite bit of the church coming across the street at one end, will recall it to those who may have seen it, and it was lighted up with the prettiest faces we had yet seen at Caudebec. So many too! At the windows, in the doorways, sitting outside, working and chatting. An al fresco at home.

"Just our luck," said Three, "not to have seen this
before the old woman’s street. I could pass my life here as a model!”

But it was too late. We had loitered into the afternoon, and there were twenty and more miles between us and Duclair, our next halt. Among other impulsive resolutions, was one to rise every morning at five—or even before it was light.

"Fancy," we said, "rowing through the cool hours of daybreak and into the sunrise. Thirty miles before ten, and fresh as a lark. All the day our own. Avoiding the mid-day heat, too, which, now that we have no helmet, is a thing to be considered. Really it’s a very happy thought; I vote we stick to it—that and inexpensive claret—and see what condition it will bring."

Carried enthusiastically; not the shadow of a dissentient voice. Result being, that one morning, under extreme pressure, we began rowing as early as nine—and never on any other occasion till one or two in the day—when we had to pay for a morning’s dolce far niente, by a continuous pull, almost without an easy, of from twenty to forty miles. But we never abandoned our intention of starting early. If you had dropped in upon us, the very night before the last day of the cruise—watched us shake hands and turn into bed—you would have heard from one room to another the same old cheery shout—

"Five o’clock to-morrow morning, old fellow—eh?"
"All right, old fellow—I shall be up hours before that!"

Caudebec came down to see us start. Old men who remembered the forest, and looked with wistful eyes on our little ship; village girls with the soft clatter of their wooden shoes,—even the old modiste hobbled after.

We improvised a randan. Stroke taking the sculls at No. 3, Bow and Three behind him, and Two steering; Gyp, with the air of an old captain, establishing himself on Stroke's vacant thwart.

"Marie! quel joli nom! et après Notre Dame! Tenez! Vous aurez de la chance, Messieurs!"

We felt half tempted to stop another night—the little town was looking so pretty and riant; but we had taken our places, felt the pleasant grip of the oar, and bade the men let go.

"Adieu, Messieurs! bon voyage—le bon Dieu vous bénisse!" and we shot out into the stream. They stood watching to the last.

We left all the brightness, in leaving Caudebec. Thick clouds gathered, and it began to rain. Not a summer shower that might pass, but a steady determined down-pour, that pattered heavily on the boat, and fell like a veil between us and the surrounding country. The tide was still flowing swiftly to the sea, and was dead against us.
"How does she travel?" we asked Coxswain.

"Beautifully! lifts to every stroke like a thoroughbred. Doesn’t mind the stream a bit. This wretched dog of yours, Bow, has filled the boat with stones, and I’m trying to get rid of them without his seeing me!"

"Yes, you’d better," said Bow, "or he’ll be after them like a shot!"

"Degrading passion!" said Two; "he’s got a monster in his mouth. He’s quite given up playing with little ones—pebbles you know. Won’t be satisfied under a brick or a small rock. Shouldn’t wonder if he’ll begin barking for cottages and maisonnettes."

"Odd it didn’t strike me before," said Stroke, "but Gyp is wonderfully like the renowned Beel!"

"Who was he?"

"That dog (thought you knew it) who was in the papers, for saving a fellow’s life during the war!"

"Silence in the boat for a story!" said Two.

"Oh! it’s very short. It was up at Douai in Faidherbe’s time. There were lots of wounded, and among them one old fellow who was just able to come out and take the air. He had a little dog—a black and tan, unmistakeably English—following at his heels, but only on three legs. He had been with Aurelles de Paladines—struck by a ball in the chest, and lay on the ground for six hours when the fighting was over. He had not lost conscious-
ness, but the blood was flowing freely, and he was gradually getting weaker. There were none but the dead near him, and his only living companion was the English terrier, who prowled restlessly about him, with his master's kepi in his mouth. At last the dog set off at a trot, and the wounded soldier made sure his only friend had deserted him. The night grew dark, and he had not even the strength to touch his wounds, which every instant grew more painful. At length his limbs grew cold, and feeling a sickly faintness steal upon him, he gave up all hope of life, and recommended himself to God. Suddenly, and when it had come to the worst, he heard a bark, which he knew belonged to only one little dog in the world,—felt something lick his face, and saw the glare of lanterns. The dog had wandered for miles till he arrived at a roadside cabaret. The people had heard the cannonading all day, and seeing the kepi in the dog's mouth, and noticing his restless movements, decided to follow him. They were just in time. The man fainted as the friendly help arrived; but he was saved. The dog, too, had been touched in the leg by a ball in the same battle, and had been since lame. He got him when a puppy from an English sailor at Dunkirk, and called him 'Beel:' very probably the French for Bill."

"Well, I'd back Gyp to do that, as often as you liked," said Bow. "Wouldn't him save his master's life, Gyppy dear?"
"Not if there were any stones in the way," said Two.
"Disgusting, that fellow's want of romance!" said Bow.
"Well," said Three, "I don't know; just now he was for marrying and settling down at Caudebec."
"Superficial sentiment! He'll want to do that every place we come to!"
"Ah, Bow! full of that parting yesterday, and the dreamy hours with Ollendorf!"
"She had such a good accent," he said softly.
"Very nice way of putting it, but all the same her eyes were dark and entreating. Not that I care for black people myself. Give me blondes!"
"Fair and fickle!" said Bow.
"Doose a bit of it. Dark and doubtful, much more likely. There's something ahead! Large bend of the river, big trees, and if one could only see through the blinding rain, something like ruins and towers beyond!"
"Which bank?"
"The right."
"Must be the great old Abbey of Jumièges," said Three. "The Curé told me so much about it last night. Wonderfully interesting. It is over 1200 years old; that's something to start with. Founded by a noble of the Court of King Dagobert. A saint too—St. Philibert. There were more than a thousand people belonging to the Abbey alone. I forget what order of monks, but one
he said that turned their hand to everything. They were great historians, great musicians, and artists. Inventors in engineering and agriculture. Drained, tilled the lands, and built an embankment, of which there are yet remains. Illuminated old vellum missals, were their own architects, taught the poor, and were princely in hospitality. They owned as far as Pont de l'Arche, a town we shall come to, some fifty miles or more up the river. William the Conqueror gave them lands in Norfolk, and the Kings and Princes of Normandy lavished offerings upon them. Edward the Confessor was educated here, and the sons of the great royal houses. Tomb of Agnes Sorel too, and curious old monuments. There was a difference, I'll venture to say, in the look of the Seine then. The place must have been like a beehive. Think of the people in the fields, on the river banks, swarming in and out of the old monastery; the retainers of the Abbey, the followers of Kings who came to pray at the shrine, the armies of poor fed daily at the gates—pilgrims. Now—ruins—deserted—silence like eternity!—over a thousand years! It's a long way to think back!"

"Ah! Same old river too," said Two—"not a bit changed. Wears wonderfully, doesn't it?"

"Flippant and unpoetic beggar—drifting by ruins of mysterious age, and in a modern outrigger. It's like rowing up the river of centuries."
"I should like to be put ashore for some claret cup," said Coxswain, whereat we shouted with laughter, looking round at the desolation—nothing but a dim outline framed in fog.

"Pull on for ten minutes, and (as little Dresden said) don't look round. I think we're coming to a good bit. Something's looming through the haze, and thank goodness the rain's stopping." Hearing this, Gyp crept from beneath a mass of mackintosh, shook himself with a thrill that went through the boat, till he nearly fell overboard, and took his old place at No. 4. We had come about ten or twelve miles, and in the teeth of the current, but the tide was so low, and the rain so dense, that all we had seen of the country was a dusky mud-bank haunting us since we started.

"Now!" said Coxswain.

We turned, and found ourselves at the foot of a noble range of hills, but which, through the illusion of the haze, looked like a mountain rising from the river to bar our way. And this suddenly, after a country—as far as we could see—comparatively flat. As we moved slowly into the defile, solid masses of white mist rolled up the hills, and nearing the summit hung across the river in a fantastic ceiling, with startling reflection in the water beneath. Then assuming fanciful shapes—some with grotesque resemblance to giants playing at football—they swept over the heights and un-
veiled the river in all its grandeur. It took a little time to see how big it was, and realise the great extent of water. There was a man up the height—a cantonnier going home from his work.

He looked like a wooden soldier.

A cottage on the far bank, no bigger than a doll's house. Green down to the water's edge with banks of lichen and moss, the hills, after one great lake curve, followed the Seine as far as the eye could reach.

The rain was over, and the sun coming out for a little, dashed the water with gold, and lit up the grey rock and purple heather of the hills with magnificent effect. The crisp freshness of a bright evening stole up, and the tide turning, was galloping under us like a race-horse at full speed. Drifting past a small village, we came up with some market boats—the first visible signs of life—going up, as we found, to Duclair.

Everything on the river was waking from the white sleep that had fallen on it.

The tinkling of sheep bells came down from the hills.

A girl driving home some cows was singing a soft Norman song, and the voices in the village sounded pleasantly after the silence of the mist we had come through. Our little flag even, that had shivered round the flagstaff in the pitiless rain, was unfolding and fluttering in the quiet tide breeze. The market boats were of quaint fashion—
half gondola, and low in the water, laden to the brim with fruit and vegetables and endless eggs. One had a donkey on board, his panniers filled and covered with snow-white serviettes. Another was distinguished by a cargo of cocks and hens, who had a good deal to say in the matter, to judge from their conversation.

"Pretty faces under those awnings," said Bow, "if it wasn't rude to stare."

They thought it no rudeness, however, to have a good look, amused, no doubt, at the little of us the rain had left, and the cheerful blue that had trickled down from the brims of our caps in a mild war-paint on the four faces. It must have been a tremendous tide, for heavy as they were, the market gondolas and barges were flying along the top of the water. But the sun going down, and a few faint signs of mist re-appearing, we settled to our work, and made the boat gallop. How pleasant were those last four or five miles in the quiet dusk—flying through the little fleet going up for the morrow's market. Nodding here, a word there, smiles from Bow, who was never at a loss for introduction, so long as he could ask how far it was to the place we were going.

"Commong vous portez vous kilomètres ici à Duclair—Mademoiselle?"

A bright laugh.

"Merci! très bien!—et Monsieur?"
Now and then the glimmer of a lantern, like Will-o’-the-wisp on the water. Then the Moon!

"Easy all—hold her!" shouted Cox; "masts of big ships ahead—and no mistake!"

We were in Duclair, and alongside the quay wall.
CHAPTER IX.

DUCLAIR—ENGLISH SAILORS—OUR INN—THE FRENCH CREW—THE MUSICIANS—THE STRANGE BOX—WHAT WAS IT?

"English voices on board that schooner, Cox! Dare say they'll help us, and clear one of the slips."

We called them.

"Yes! if you'll pay us!"

And the tide swinging up like a mill-race.

Then they saw we were gentlemen, and cringed.

"'Taint us, masters! it's this 'ere 'un—he's always 'avin of his larks."

Nice definition of a lark! However, it may have been that the rest of the crew were really ashamed of their mate—for down they came with a will, cleared the slip in no time, lifted her from the water, and carried her on to the quay. It was odd to hear English in this out-of-the-way place. "Gently with her, my lads! 'Arry, you'll stove her sides in with them thumbs o' your'n."

"Better look arter rooms, gentlemen—or you won't get none. It's a fair to-morrow, and the town's as full
as it can hold. A Feet too goin' on, haint there, 'Enery?"

"Ah! Shampeter or somethin'!"

We rushed at once to the principal hotel. Not a room—not room to dine even! As Duclair is represented chiefly by the few houses facing the river, we hadn't far to go to look for another. This time an auberge! same result! A little further on, however, we came to a low white building—the windows opening on to the river, and filled with flowers, through which the softened light streamed—ringing laughter, and the clatter of knives and forks.

"Hurrah! they have got two rooms—if we don't mind their being very small! and there's a courtyard for the boat. No use leaving her on the quay. Carts and things smash her before morning."

Threading our way, with the help of the gallant tars, through a maze of fruit-baskets, carts, char-à-bancs, and the rest, we housed the "Marie" comfortably, and stood the long oars against the wall.
The sailors drank our healths vigorously in the red glare of the kitchen doorway.

"Better get wet things off," said Two; "I'm shrunk up to my knees. Good gracious! look at this room!"

It was about large enough for two canaries! How they ever squeezed in the couple of cradles they called beds, was beyond us. But they could get in nothing else—not even a table! We had to arrange our dressing things on the floor. It had the effect of making us look absurdly large, and so to speak, out of all drawing. The one thing in proportion was the wash basin—such as you see in birdcages, when they take their bath. Bow and Three were better off. They had a real mantelpiece—with the everlasting ormolu clock and candlesticks—and Napoleon crossing the Alps in the firegrate. But Two and Stroke, united by joint property in "Cording," had little more space than the interior of a Punch and Judy.

"Capital notion, beginning your dinner with melon."

"Ah! isn't it tranquilising?"

"I like the room, too—specially with those plants and things in the windows. And very prettily arranged. Glimpses of the river flashing through them! It's not often one finds such pictures—and framed in flowers!—
Jolly, isn't it—after those twenty miles—twelve or fourteen, too, against stream—and such a stream! You had heavy work with those sculls, Stroke! What a glow it gives one! I don't believe any fellow before ever had such a circulation."

"I know a fellow," said Two, "who has 'the largest in the world.'"

"Here's a yacht swinging across the stream," said Three. "There—you can see her in the moonlight. Cutter-rigged and looks speedy. She seems to have come in the same direction as ourselves. We must have passed her in the mist."

"Ah!" said Two, "there was something said at Caudebec of her going by early this morning. She belongs to a Comte de —. Four or five on board. Students, I fancy. Why they're actually coming in here. Well—as a natural curiosity, I should like to see the size of the rooms they'll have!"

In they came, making the little house ring with their laughter. Four good-looking fellows, dressed in close-fitting dark blue jerseys—rakish-looking red caps—enormous boots. Drenched, of course, with the long day's rain—and quite enjoyed it. Lost their way in the mist, and spent the morning on a sandbank, and nothing to eat. "Figurez-vous ça, mon enfant!" (to the landlord).
“Ah! quel horreur!” (laying four covers with lightning rapidity).

“But Henri had his flute—and the tide rose—et nous y voici!”

Only one room for the four. They didn’t mind it a bit.

“Dame! il y a quatre coins!”

We were at home with them in ten minutes, when under similar circumstances in England, an acquaintance would not have happened in as many weeks. Their gaiety infected every one, and we were only too willing to catch it. The Comte was more than good looking, and had grand shoulders, a square figure, and blue eyes. He was capitaine of the little vessel, and they were, like ourselves, bound for Paris!

A very old man outside the window, with only the bones of a voice left, but grandly supported by another old man on an ophicleide, began a tremulous quavering chant about the King of Yvetot.

\[
\text{Il était un Roi d’Yvétot peu connu dans l’histoire,}
\]

Se levant tard, se couchant tôt,
Dormant fort bien sans gloire,
Et couronné par Jeanneton
D’un simple bonnet de coton.

The ophicleide took snuff every occasional bar, but
made up for it by tremendous fortissimo when he went at it again. It had a very funny effect:—

\[ \text{here snuff} \]

But there was a great deal more than ever Béranger wrote on the subject. It seemed to have over sixty long couplets, and wandered into the original legend, which all the peasants have at their finger ends, but with various colouring. This is one. Yvetot is a little town, a few miles from Duclair, and in the time of King Clothaire it belonged to a noble seigneur, whose name was Gauthier, and who was Chamberlain of the King. Through the intrigue of his rivals, Gauthier fell into disgrace, and fearing the King’s anger, fled from the Court, and spent ten years in Palestine. Then hoping that after so long a time all would be forgotten, he returned. Passing through Rome he had an audience of the Pope, Agapet I., who gave him letters of recommendation to the King. It was Good Friday, and the King was in the church at Soissons. Gauthier, trusting to the sanctity of the place and the day, threw himself at the feet of the monarch. But when Clothaire saw him, he rose, and in his fury plunged a sword through his heart. Not for twenty years did the King discover Gauthier’s innocence, and then, filled with
remorse, and as an atonement for what he had done, erected the seigneurie of Yvetot into a kingdom, and declared its lords and heirs to be its future kings. The extent of the kingdom is gathered from some old poetry of the 12th century:—

"Au noble pays de Caux
Y a quatre abbaies royaux,
Six prieurés conventuaux
Et six barons de grand arroi,
Quatre comtes, trois ducs, un roi."

"You should go to Yvetot," said the Comte, "if only to hear the accent of the people. It is the most bewildering patois. 'Un ptieu chican!' and, ma foi! how well one dines there! In the smallest auberge you recognize the touch of a chef. Ah! monsieur is right, it takes so much time to do all these things. But there is Saint Wandrille, so near too, only it is best seen at moonlight, and to-night I fear there is already a change. Since we have been dining, there is a sifflement in the air I do not like. You would see a charming little village sleeping—ah! mon Dieu! in so tender a valley. A quiet stream creeping away to the big Seine. On its banks the ruins of one of the oldest abbeys. One cannot tell such things—they must be seen. We were going to sketch it—Ah! Monsieur is also an artist! Permettez—ah! c'est charmant—c'est ravissant—c'est—- tiens! Henri! regarde-moi ça!"

The old street in Caudebec.
Henri recognized it at once, and found out Three rapt in ecstatic contemplation of the old modiste.

"Monsieur is amateur of the beautiful in real as in still life!"

"You will let us see your boat," said the Comte, as we lingering in the long cloudland after dinner. We went out, and found our friends the sailors (all but the mercenary marine, who was abashed, and would not show himself) gravely examining her.

"As pretty a little wessel, sir, as me and my mates ever see nothing like. But it do seem a pity as the party buildin' of her 'ave left her too open fore and aft. Couldn't 'ave knowed this here river. It's one thing you see, sir, playin' about on the Thames, and it's another to come into these waters, which is wild at times, and might be, so to speak, tryin'. Me and 'Enery was just a sayin' as how it wouldn't be amiss, if you 'eaves across a professional party, to 'ave her covered in a bit—specially for'ard."

The Comte and his friends were delighted, but thought, with the sailors, that there might be a little risk in the event of bad weather.

The unanimity of opinion pleased both sides so much, that the sailors this time bravely drank the health of the Frenchmen.

These tranquil pretty towns on the Seine go to sleep very soon. Duclair was yet awake, but gradually closing
its eyes, putting out its lights one by one, and nodding over the still unfinished legend of the Roi d’Yvetot.

"Peu connu dans l’histoire,"

stole upon us once again in tremulous breaths, with the spasmodic but undying grandeur of the ophicleide.

As we were saying good night, a somewhat mysterious and aside conversation between the French crew attracted and made us wonder a little. They were laughing as usual while looking for something or other in their bags. All of a sudden an expression of blankness and dismay shadowed their faces. "Where can it be? Ah! mon Dieu, let us look again!" They turned out everything from the bags; searched every corner; dived into every pocket. "Ah! mon Dieu, que faire; and we only bought it this morning. Quel horreur! et dans la nuit j’ai tant souffert!"

"Et moi!"

"Et moi!"

"Et moi!"

"Le voici," said Henri, producing a small tin machine about the size of a tooth-powder box, and with a resemblance in shape that varied between a teapot, an inkstand, or bellows. It had a spout and a spring handle. The sun broke through the clouds. "Ah! quel bonheur! Nous voilà sauvés! Pour ce soir, on va dormir en paix."

"Bon soir, Messieurs, et adieu! We shall not see you
again. We start in the early morning, and before you. 
_Bon voyage_, and, let us hope, _au revoir!_”

We met silently in our room, and looked at one another.

“What was that box?”

But no one could answer.

“Well, good night, old fellow! Five o’clock, you know—eh?”

“All right, old fellow—good night!”
CHAPTER X.

THE MARKET FÊTE—HOW THE PEOPLE ARRIVED—THE PRETTY NORMAN MAIDENS—MOUSTACHE AND TARAPATAPOUM—GYP’S AMAZEMENT—THE BARRE—LUMPY WEATHER—OUR DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING OFF—WE COME TO GRIEF—WEATHER GETS WORSE—BREADTH OF RIVER.

The sailors woke us in the morning with a boisterous sea song. They were mopping the boat, baling out the rain-water, fixing the pads, and making all taut and trim, your honour.

"Most extraordinary," said Bow, "how easily one oversleeps. I quite intended to be up at daybreak and see those fellows start. But I had such a delicious night—slept like a top!"

"I didn’t," said Two. "I almost fancy there must be mosquitoes or something about. I thought one left all that sort of thing in London. Where’s Three?"

"There—you can see him from the window, having a preliminary canter among the peaches. He says they’re the most wonderful things before breakfast—and indeed after. He must be in his third dozen by this."

"Do you know I believe they are very bracing. Let’s try!"
Without being as picturesque as Caudebec, Duclair is pretty and interesting, from its position on the river; just as if it had wandered along the banks, looking for some place to settle, and seeing this quiet nook in a bend of the river, had said, "This will do for me," and so crept in and nestled down between the stream, the hills, and a huge rock, called by the mariners of the Basse Seine, la chaise de Gargantua. But the origin of the name is unexplained, either by history or tradition.

It was one of three great fair and market days held during the year. All the country for miles round came over to the little village from both sides of the river. That alone was worth seeing—the arrival! Who could have built the old char-à-bancs, and antique gigs, and carts, that brought them? Who among professional antiquarians could have fixed their date? Springs? Pas si bête—far more healthy the massive irregular jolting, that required the seat of a jockey to prevent being thrown out. But filled with soft fresh straw, and here and there red cushions, that lit up the dark blue skirts of the peasant girls. From Maromme and Yvetot, Caudebecquet, Anneville, Mesnil, and from beyond the forest of Brotonne, they kept streaming in. A French crowd—especially a country one—is always pretty. In the first place it is charmingly clean; and then it has colour, and the colours of all others that produce the brightest effects. Look at one, where there
are some hundreds of women in blue petticoats, white Norman or Breton caps, and a kerchief of deep red; see them mingling and flashing by each other, and watch the delicious confusion. The heavy gold earrings, the long gold crosses on the breast, and beyond all, the faces under the caps.

They are so pretty!

Moving that day among the peaches and flowers, they threw them into shadow and shamed them.

It is impossible not to be struck with the great difference in dress between the lower classes in England and France.

With the first, it is a faded and weak imitation of their betters—an aping to appear something they are not. Result, grotesque and shabby.

In France they preserve the costume that has been transmitted from generation to generation. They are not ashamed—they are proud of it. The stuff is coarse to a degree, but it is strong and serviceable, scrupulously clean, and somehow has a new look. It costs little—beyond the labour of washing—and that is why, with the poorest fish girls, you see, without exception, such neat shoes (and, by the way, all Frenchwomen have pretty feet). They can afford it, as well as the gold ornaments, which are either the investment of part of their earnings, or, as mostly happens, heirlooms from time immemorial. And here again
there is a total absence of seeking to imitate others. The pattern of the earrings and crosses is inexorably their own. They are distinctive marks of the country and even village. You know at once by their ornaments whether they are Portel, or Boulonnais, Breton, or Basque. This exclusive conservatism confers a special dignity and interest. You see pictures and prints of them through the towns—not what they were in past ages, but as they now walk about the streets. Their ordinary costume is an invaluable resource for fancy balls. The result would hardly be so picturesque if one went for models to Battersea or Ramsgate.

The *patois* is undeniable. Prenez swain (*soin*) de ça looks as if it would sound odd, but uttered by the right person, is like a song. And if you come to think of it, there can be no *patois* in the eyes, and Bow said he found so many things intelligible in that way, that otherwise would have been difficult without a dictionary. We began to see Bow had a special system of his own for learning languages.

Besides the carts and *char-à-bancs* that jolted over the hills, boats came up with the tide during the day, such as we had seen the night before, when we shot through them in the last league. Those of the gondola shape came principally from Rouen, where afterwards we saw them used as the ordinary ferry boats of the place. Some had a
violin on board, others the unpretending flute; the majority had the everlasting mirliton, decked in blue ribbons, with which they preluded and interluded the old couplets—

"Faut jouer le mirliton,
Faut jouer le mirlitir,
Faut jouer le mirlitir,
Mir — li — ton."

"Jolly old Babel!" said Two. "Knocks Masaniello into nowhere. Hallo! here's old Ophicleide and Co. at it again!"

They were doing a thriving speculation among the fruit awnings, and this morning had two dogs who were profound at tricks and collected the sous. Delicious dogs—the real white French poodle, shaved to an inch, all except the head, a clown's frill round the neck, and a powder puff at the tail. Old performing dogs, with a quaint appreciation of each other's humour.

One was called Moustache, the other Tarapatapoum!

Gyp sate down in the middle of the road, dropping a big stone from his mouth, in a stare of astonishment, and with the nearest approach to a laugh ever seen on a dog's face. After some funny acrobatic feats, the performance changed. There was a loud and startling blast from the ophicleide, meant to represent the boom of a cannon.

Moustache pretended to be dead; Tarapatapoum shouldered a musket and marched past.
The laugh died on Gyp's face, and all the way as we went back to breakfast he was strangely thoughtful, and passed a heap of stones without looking at them.

"There ain't much time, gentlemen, if you means startin'. Though me and my mates we don't much like the looks of the weather. It's gettin' too dark. There's a bit o' wind somewhere, and the river don't look in a uncommon good temper. And about three miles from here there's a big reach, where it ain't likely to be pertikler pleasant. Ah! well, if you really means it, sir, you'd better 'ave all the tide you can, and here she comes with a will!"

The people turned to see it. No barre; but where it would have been, a thin streak of white foam, looking more white under a black sky, and stretching across from bank to bank. The advanced guard of the great mass of water hurrying up from the sea.

It swept past with a kind of shiver.

There was a sudden strain on the cables, and the vessels along the quay began to rock and sway from side to side.

The market girls crossing over in the big ferry boats laughed as the spray dashed up in their faces, and cried, "Ah! le vilain fleuve!"

We waited on the slip for more than an hour before we could launch the "Marie"; and when we did send her in,
it was no easy matter to stow the luggage and embark. She had a frightened, restless look, like a horse that is brought round to the door, and shows a decided disinclination to let you get up. Her length was so great, and the rush of the tide so swift, that had we attempted to turn, and so get her alongside, her ribs might have been broken in. As it was, with all the English sailors lending a hand, we could not manage to steady her; for we were cramped in between two brigs in a very awkward position. Once a steamer flying past, and close to us, nearly dashed her against the stone piers. Then there was a lull, which we believed to be the forerunner of quiet weather. Still the water was lumpy, and we had to crawl in one by one on our hands and knees. It is at no time a dignified attitude—clutching on to the sides with all your hands, and not unfrequently scraping your shins.

Babette laughed. She and a bevy of peasant girls had a private box, and enjoyed it as if they were at the Palais Royal. Even old Ophicleide was amused, and Moustache and Tarapatapoum looked down at Gyp from the quay wall with a quiet grin.

Had it not been for the lull, such as it was, we might have taken wiser counsel and not started; but once in the boat, and after that laugh, we felt we could hardly change our minds before the crowd of bright eyes that would have twinkled so mischievously. But we did not know—till we
heard it some time after—that the pilots were making little books, and betting we should never arrive at Rouen—nor come back, if once we set out.

"Are you ready, sir?"

"Ay, ay, let go! Pull her round, Two! Ready with that gaff, Bow!"

"Look out, sir; look out!"

A slip of the gaff or something, and the tide swung her round, grazing her alongside the brig, crushing Stroke's right outrigger, and altogether very near an upset.

Another titter like a wave going through the crowd.

"Dame! j'aime mieux rester ici," said Babette.

"Better drop back, sir, and have her looked to."

"No! I'll be —— Pull her on, Bow and Two; better go on the whole journey with only a pair than turn back now. Make for the opposite bank; we've got that bag of tools, thank goodness, and some extra thole-pins. Now, if we can steady her a bit under this tree—— Damn that Gyp, he's off again!"  

One of his old headers—after some absurd rock at the bottom; a scramble up an almost perpendicular bank, and wagging his tail with a kind of self-satisfaction at having done a real good thing.

We could hear renewed laughter from the other side, like murmurs of applause. I wonder if they took us for comedians. We were certainly not showing to advantage.
A short ten minutes sufficed to repair the outrigger, but it took twice the time to induce Gyp to come back.

"I do believe those people thought we were going to camp here for the night, and afraid to go on," said Two. "Look at them watching us yet—all there for another performance. How jolly the effect is, with all those blue, white, and red dresses under the grey sky, and backed up with the rocks and hills! How about keeping her along this bank, or what?"

"Better go right out into mid-stream. We've our work before us—a good three and twenty miles—and we may as well get all the tide we can."

By degrees Duclair began to lessen. The pleasant noise of the fair and clatter of the market softened to a hum, and at last died. But for a long time we could see red and white dots flitting about, and distinguish the ferry-boats crossing and re-crossing. Then the beginning of a big bend shut it all out, and we were alone on the river—on top of a fierce current and under an angry sky.

We were rowing as on the day before: Stroke with the sculls, Three moving up to No. 2, Bow at his old place, and Two steering. There was a wide difference in the weather. From Caudebec to Duclair we had mist, and a heavy, continuous, drenching rain, but the water was like glass. Now there was no rain, but a strong wind on our quarter that made it difficult to feather, and a
chopping sea that flew off the blades into our faces. But the "Marie" went through it steadily.

We ploughed along for three miles, with nothing worse than wet jackets, and rather tough work to get on. The sudden gusts unsteadied and stopped the boat, and made the rowing difficult. As yet we had the wind on our quarter, but we were now about to enter one of those enormous detours so frequent on the Seine. Caudebec, Duclair, and Rouen, are in a direct route, but between each the river winds to the southward to such an extent as to nearly treble the distance by road. Hitherto, sheltered comparatively by the land, we had not encountered the full force of the wind. Beyond the island the Seine opened out and swept to the south for eight or nine long miles.

Half an hour after we left Duclair, we rounded the island, and the long reach opened out before us.

It was the one the sailor spoke of as not being "pertikler pleasant."

Very nearly three quarters of a mile from shore to shore, and we were in the middle.

Two things are charming when they travel the same road—the wind and tide!

"But let them meet ——"

"Ah! scullern und blistern," said Cox.

Now up this reach the wind came straight as an arrow—not steadily or continuously, but in treacherous squalls,
that hurled savagely against the fierce swing of the tide. The tide rose up to meet it, and between the two there was a chance of any boat in the way becoming a shuttlecock. There was a lull as we entered, and for some time tranquil water, the "Marie" travelling very fast.

Then without any warning, the oars were all but swept out of our hands, we were driven back half a length, and the river, as if for the moment cowed by the squall, reeled in broken waves, moderately deluging Bow as it passed.

"It’s getting awfully wet up here," he remarked.

"Only a spoonful; send her along. How does she stand it, Cox?"

"Never enjoyed anything like it. Stand it? She goes at it straight! I didn’t think one could get up so much interest in a bit of cedar. It’s almost exciting. To see it coming as it did just now, you’d fancy it was all up. Doose a bit! you lose her nose and the flag for a second, and out she comes, shaking off the water like a dog. All the same it’s a sea, you know, and if—. Steady, all; here’s some of it!"

It staggered the boat, and we shipped more water.

"Tell you what," said Bow; "it is coming in, and my things are taking to floating."

"Another spoonful won’t hurt!"

"I wonder," said Three, "would it be any good to stand in for one of these shores—smoother water, perhaps?"
“Doubt if it would be wise to try. Long way from land, and broadside to any one of these waves might mean going down.”

“Ah! perhaps it’s as well to avoid that!”

“Edge her in quietly, Cox; but keep her straight as you can.”

We were half way down the reach, and it was but four miles to the point; in other words, four miles to a due north course, with a river smooth as a mill-pond, and the wind in our favour. But the water we had shipped was rising over our ankles, the boat labouring heavily, the wind freshening every minute, and wave after wave hissing along the gunwale as if to show how near they could come. At times we were so low that it seemed rowing in, not on the water.

The thing was to reach that point. Could we live so long?
CHAPTER XI.

WE ARE SWAMPED—TWO CAN'T SWIM—BOW NEARLY DROWNED—DRIFT WITH THE BOAT—GYP ON KEEL—PICKED UP.

It settled down to a race with Time.

Had there been on the banks an impassive spectator of sporting tendency, he would probably have laid odds that the boat was not "in it."

And at the distance this speculator would have been, she would have looked only a toy vessel, with a crew of Marionettes—one Marionette with an eye-glass dimmed with the blinding spray.

She was in truth little more, in the face of such a sea as was now coming to meet her.

"It's on top of us," said Two; "look out—"

We heard it before he warned us. There was no mistaking the sound.

It broke right over Bow. The water rushed in, and everything began swimming. Gyp jumped on Two's lap for a dry spot.

"No use mincing matters," said Stroke. "Straight for shore, Cox, and row all!"
"When I heard that," said Two, "I knew it was up!"

The moment we turned another struck us.

We began to sink!

And there was a man in the boat who couldn't swim!

A quarter of a mile to shore, and a sea that few swimmers would have cared to tempt in laced boots.

Not a house or living being to be seen—not even a wild goat.

The "Marie" went gallantly at it to the last—the little flag fluttering in shreds, and an inch of the gunwale out of water.

"If that market-girl was here," said Bow, "who laughed at us!"

"Ah, Babette! how wet she'd get!"

"This looks about the last of it!" said Two.

It was the biggest squall yet, and we could see it hurling up the long four miles, and stretching from bank to bank. It looked as if for the moment it had conquered the tide, and was driving it back to the sea.

There was a great swish.

* * *

The waters closed in the usual way.

On re-appearing everyone looked for Two, and there was a moment of painful suspense.
He came up with his glass in his eye—fortunately close to the boat, to which he clung with decided instinct,—and gasped out,—

"I know a fel——"

But he had swallowed so much water that he could only point. It was a boy on the bank, looking a long way off. We shouted to him, but either he did not hear, or we frightened him, for he took to his heels like lightning.

But Bow was nowhere to be seen.

"Good Heaven—could he possibly——"

"May have stuck to his seat," said Three.

The boat was keel upwards. We looked—no Bow.

Two, still full of water, pointed shorewards.

About a hundred yards away was a straw hat bobbing up and down, washed over and hidden at intervals by the waves. We concluded Bow must be somewhere about it, for no hat, not even the helmet, could have travelled the distance in the time.

We drifted back towards the middle of the river, where the current was still strongest. Oars, sculls, dressing bags, floor boards, jackets, and everything we had going off on independent excursions. Through the gloom of the shipwreck a smile like sunrise dawned on Two's face, as he telegraphed to Stroke to look at Cording floating like a cork, tranquil and impassive, on the face of the waters.
The bolster was triumphant. The delicate Russias were sinking.

Stroke swam out to save the artist and another bag which were in imminent danger. Gyp, who had been perched on the keel, and wondering what we were playing at, woke up suddenly to the discovery and sprang after. This was grander than stones. The waves were a little disconcerting, but he paddled manfully through them till he came among the débris, and, singling out the biggest, began tugging resolutely at Cording.

It might have been ten minutes when we saw Bow turn back and swim towards us. He seemed to move feebly and with effort. We were laughing at him as he drew near, but quickly stopped when we saw the expression on his face. He was all but drowning, and making desperate efforts to reach us. We were the wrong side, but before we had time, two last strokes brought him to the boat, upon which he fell in utter exhaustion. His clothes and boots, and, above all, a heavy woollen Guernsey, had been too much for him, and before he was half way were dragging him down. He could go no farther; and even as it was, had he not been an excellent swimmer, would never have returned. He said himself, only a few yards more and it might have been hopeless.

Even shipwreck may become monotonous. We drifted
on for three-quarters-of-an-hour—no one in sight, and no possible help at hand; and then—no one saw where it came from—a boat bore down upon us, and welcome sight, a man in a blue blouse.
CHAPTER XII.

JEAN BAPTISTE LE CAUX—OUR WALK TO ROUEN.

We were picked up by Jean Baptiste le Caux.

He was a ferryman, and lived on the Ile St. Georges, the island we had made out a mile ahead when we went down, and to which the tide had now carried us.

"Dieu merci, messieurs, vous avez la bonne chance!"

It was by the merest accident he had seen us. He had been at Duclair, and came down an hour or two before on the top of the flood, and was within two minutes of rounding the island to his cottage when he saw us a long way off in the water. But for those two minutes we might have drifted Heaven knows how long without seeing a soul.

"Ah, dame oui! À Paris il y a du monde—mais ici on est bien tranquille."

It was very shivering work cruising about for a long half-hour to pick up what had not gone down. Almost everything valuable had sunk, and, worst of all for the time being, our rudder. The little flag was on the point
of disappearing, but saved in the nick of time. We had secured what there was, and were towing the boat to land, when some one spied a tiny piece of blue under the water. Being close to it we seized and drew it up. It was the last corner of Bow's jacket, and in it were his watch and chain, with his rings attached. In striking out for shore he believed it was a struggle for life, and kicked the jacket from him, watch and all. And then we came across a forgotten flask of brandy, of whose existence no one had dreamed. Was ever brandy so welcome?

Land at last—hauled the "Marie" on shore—turned out the water, and found she was sound as a bell, and not the shadow of a strain. And then we looked at one another and laughed. The water was flowing from us, and made four little lakes in the sand. We looked supremely ridiculous. What was to be done? We first of all borrowed some tobacco from Jean Baptiste; saw we had no rudder; and, under all circumstances, thought it wisest to strike across country on foot for Rouen. We left the boat on the bank (no need to ask any one to look after her, there was no one to ask), and re-crossed the river. A wild, lonely-looking ferry. A big bell on a solitary post, which, if the wind was in the right direction, would be heard by Jean Baptiste on his island. It didn't seem as if it was often rung. Leaving the oars with J. B., we told him we would come back next day and
row the boat to Rouen. And then to get dry we set off as hard as we could and lost our way; but presently up a shady lane came to a pretty farmhouse, with a pretty Norman maiden sitting under the trees of the orchard. We all went in to ask the right road.

"Sure to offer us goat's milk and white napkins," said Two. "I know the Norman hospitality—it's a proverb. And lots of fruit; and then such coffee, and a pipe under those trees; and the little maiden waiting on us and singing us quaint cantiques. Wouldn't have missed this for anything! Who knows, may invite us to stay the night?"

But we had not calculated on the probable effect of our appearance. We were much too wet. The little maid eyed us with grave suspicion, and very briefly answered our questions; but when we had gone a little way she called us back.

"Knew I must be right," said Two. It was only to tell us that it was customary for people to shut the gate after them dans cet endroit.

After a few minutes the river lane stole into a little village, and stopped reverently in front of a majestic church; one that seemed more fitted for the cathedral of a town than for the few white cottages that nestled round it. The danger we had been in, our narrow escape, and the fact of our being picked up almost opposite to this church, filled us with no ordinary emotion as we went in
to offer up our thanks to God. The unutterable peace of
the grand and stately interior, brought back the rush of the
water and all the rest we had laughed at so lightly, but
which might have had so different an ending. It was the
famous church of the old Abbey of St. Georges de Boscher-
ville—the purest specimen of Norman architecture possibly
in the country. On a tablet we read—

Par la pieuse munificence
De Raoul de Tancarville,
Grand Chambellan de Guillaume
Dit le Conquérant,
Duc de Normandie,
Cette Église
A été construite
Entre les Années 1050 et 1066.
Laus Deo, Pax Vivis, Requies Defunctis.

The largest of the white cottages was an *auberge*. We
went in. The landlord, a very fat old man of short stature,
was so absorbed in staring at
nothing, as barely to notice our
entrance. Quite a curiosity shop.
A cloud of fishing-nets fell from
the walls, only with openings
where were bits of china and old
clocks. From the oak beams
hung jars and straw hats, broken
umbrellas, bacon, and carriage-lamps. The *comptoir* a
very model of neatness, only the little cognac barrel with
its brass fittings and silver taps was placed so high as to necessitate standing on a chair to reach it. Hearing singing, we went into the kitchen, and found an old woman in a red petticoat peeling delicious onions, and a young girl making lace. In this room the vines wandered in from the outside and crept along the ceiling, through the open door, and up to the little cognac barrel, which they festooned prettily. There was not the faintest surprise on seeing us, nor any curiosity as to why we were dripping all about the tiled floor. It was so quiet, so tranquil a little spot, that if we had come in chain-armour and clarions they would have taken it for granted as the costume of the big towns. Red petticoat barely looked up from her onions, and the girl went on singing over her lace. But they gave us fragrant coffee, fresh eggs, and excellent cognac. We tried to interest the old man in the story of our wreck, but he was wrapped in dreams and barely heard us. If we had stopped long we must have gone to sleep, and yielded to the drowsy influence of that man, and the sound of the girl's singing. So we asked him the way, but only heard something about a forest we had to pass through, with wolves in it. We left the little village down in the valley, and came to the hills that overlooked both great arms of the Seine, encircling us as on an island. It looked quiet now, but yet with angry white spots. Our road took us through the Forest of Roumare;
but we saw no wolves, although keeping a brisk look-out. If we came to cross-roads we invariably stopped, each having a pet theory as to the right one, and making our Artist sit down on the road and draw our several plans in the sand with his finger. It was a pretty walk. Through masses of dark pines; through rich sunny corn country; white villages clad with vines; and past old châteaux with long sombre avenues and lofty iron gates; till at last we burst suddenly on a glorious view—one perhaps in a thousand. We were standing by the church and close to the old Louis XIV. château of Cantileu; and almost at our feet, though two miles or more distant down the hill, was Rouen. Beyond it the mount of Ste. Catherine, and on its summit the church of Bon Secours; the Seine, like a flash of silver, meeting us once more after a bend of nearly twenty miles, and winding under the bridges of the old city till it was lost in the far hills.

There was a wonderful stained window in the church close to where we stood. We went in. It was the Deluge. A huge rock—the last thing left from the creeping waters. At its foot a white corpse drifting by. On the left a young man, the personification of grand strength—his wife and child clinging to him—striving to lift his father above the flood. On the right a man clutching the mane of a drowning horse, and close to a ghastly face livid with rage and despair. A snake, crawling and hissing, figures on the
summit in mute agony. In the distance the Ark in untroubled water.

Opposite the church another pretty auberge, where Jean reçoit des noces et festins—quatre-vingt couverts! Very inviting, only Rouen looked so near, and we were not yet dry. Down the hill we came into the long boulevards leading to the city. All the poetry and freshness of the country was gone in an instant. The pleasant solitariness and stillness we had come from, jarred by the continuous wheels over the stones, the cocked hats at the barriers, and the roadside photograph studios.

Absurd as we must have looked, there was very little staring, and not one rude remark till we arrived at the Hôtel d'Angleterre. There a swaggering Briton criticised us very audibly, and said we were a "composite lot."

The landlord was demonstrative in his welcome. The two spare oars which had been sent on from Caudebec, were exhibited conspicuously in the hall. The waiters evidently formed a wild idea of our grandeur in sending on such avant-courriers, and were lavish of attention. The landlord was désolé. Ah! bon Dieu, was it possible we could forgive him? he had only one room to offer—one room with four beds, which, expecting our arrival, he had already denied to two English Milord Mayors.

We were too glad to get anywhere for the moment.
All the waiters wanted to show us the room, but were motioned back by one, who had the most extraordinary resemblance to Napoleon.

"On va vous conduire, messieurs! Pardon—par ici!"
CHAPTER XIII.

ROUEN — ALEXANDRINE — NAPOLEON — NO CLOTHES — CORDING — TABLE D'HÔTE — THE FAT SISTERS — "QUARANTECINQ MINUITS DANS L'EAU!"

—ASTONISHMENT OF THE GENERAL.

Alexandrine was the brightest, merriest, and kindest of femmes de chambre.

She burst into the room just as we dragged off our wet things, giving us barely time to fly behind the curtains.

Seeing four dishevelled heads peep out, she laughed till the tears came.

"Mais, comme ils sont drôles, ces messieurs!"

"I wonder if she
thinks we’re playing hide and seek with her,” said Bow. “Mademoiselle, je voulez vous dire que——”

But she laughed more and more, and gathering up all our clothes at one swoop, vanished abruptly as she came.

We had to go to bed!

And the sun shining, though we couldn’t see it—for the windows were peculiar. Ceiling and floor looked as if they had been dislodged by an earthquake. At the top of the wall, there was a glimpse of the lower portion of the windows belonging to the people above; and a few inches from the floor were the upper panes of the windows in the room beneath. To look into the street, you had to lie flat on the ground—or get a ladder. We were in the former position, when Napoleon entered with a welcome tray luncheon.

“When we finished, the bootmakers would be ready to attend on us!”

“What?”

“Pardon!” He had forgot to mention—the clothes were being dried and ironed, but the shoes—they experience a little malheur. They were placed too near the fire, and having gutta-percha soles —— Mais, mon Dieu! in skilful hands they would recover. Only for the moment the landlord had sent a few makers with boots to try on.
We received the deputation in blankets.
At the same instant the waiters rushed in with our other wet things—the salvage from the wreck, sent on by Jean Baptiste.
It was a melancholy exhibition.
All the bags coming to pieces, and a mass of discoloration inside.
We spread them out on the floor, and stood in our blankets, helpless amid the ruins, with the silent sympathy of bootmakers, waiters, and Blanchisseuses.
The colours in the artist bag had oozed through, and formed rainbows on everything.
But then Alexandrine came in with sunshine—and Cording: the one thing that had not been touched by the water. There were fortunately enough things in it for the crew to go on with, and we should be able to appear at the table d'hôte.
Without Alexandrine we could have done nothing. She saw what was to be done at a glance, and did it. Gave her orders to Blanchisseuses and bootmakers, with interludes of infectious laughter at our ludicrous costume. But nothing would fit. Three could only get into a monster pair of fishing-boots, and Two dressed for dinner in one evening boot and a sabot. The tiny bit of sun that peeped in at the toy windows was in great requisition, to dry the French and English bank-notes pinned to the floor. They too
had been saturated, and had given way at the foldings, and not a little anxiety was felt as to their probable reception at the bank.

Then we got rid of our visitors, blockaded the door, yielded to the heavy drowsiness the water had brought on, and slept soundly till dinner.

When we awoke the bell was ringing.

Napoleon marshalled the way through a long large room, filled almost with English.

At least, there was no conversation.

Opposite to where we sate were two fat old ladies.

The elder must have been about sixty, the younger fifty-three.

In an hotel, one unavoidably hears the history of nearly everybody. They were sisters, rich, with an inordinate passion for waltzing. The elder was spiteful, and told people her sister was a giddy thing, and flirted when she was not looking.

The flirt had a moustache.

By way of reproof the elder sister kicked the younger, who, though she felt it was coming, could not get out of the way—she was so fat.

The kicks under the table must have been severe during dinner, for—we wondered at the time why—as often as she looked or smiled at Bow, a shade of anguish immediately covered her face.
It was a jour maigre, and at our end of the table almost every one dined off fish.

"Garçon! moï je ne suis pas maigre," said Bow!

"Dame! non! monsieur est très bien," said Napoleon, bowing—but then understood, and brought some rosbif saignant.

It was a change after the little inns of Caudebec and Duclair, and we liked the latter better. Though here the dinner was unexceptionable and the comfort perfect.

"Et pour le vin, messieurs?" said Napoleon.

Remembering our stern resolution, we asked for vin ordinaire.

Then, when he had gone, Stroke said—

"Somehow I feel a little low this evening!"

"My dear fellow," said Three, with a shade of anxiety, "I wouldn't let that go on. I wouldn't, indeed! Do you know, I believe a little champagne would do you good."

"Do you really think so, old fellow?"

"Sure of it, old fellow."

"But it doesn't seem genial, drinking by one's self."

"Oh! if you've that feeling about it," said Three, "for once in a way, I don't mind joining you in a bottle."

"Well, I don't know; if I take it at all,—I always think after you've been wrecked——"

"So do I," said Two; "one bottle only enough for a
fellow, of course, when he goes in for it medicinally. I know a doctor—and"

The result of the sympathy for Stroke's feeling a "little low" being four Pommery & Greno, extra sec—and from that evening there was a tacit avoidance of any reference to the solemn vow at Caudebec.

One of the features of French hotel life is the sitting out after dinner. For quiet enjoyment there's nothing like it in England—only in country houses.

There are certain hours of the day pleasant to look forward to. In winter, for instance, the solitary half-hour or more in your own room, in a drowsy arm-chair before the fire, when you pray that Morley or Wiggins may forget the dressing-bell, if only for a few minutes longer. Then again the late five tea in the schoolroom—because it's the cosiest in the house—and "we somehow or other always come here now, since the girls have grown up;" and because the men may drop in direct from shooting in the most reckless boots, sip bitters, or play at tea with the child-daughter, who is never by any chance called by her right name.

So with the hour after dinner in France—though in a different way.

In front of the "Angleterre" was a little garden of white marble tables, shady plants, and comfortable causeuses. A
long promenade screened from the road and the river by a row of trees. Some way down, streams of light flashing across into the trees, from the bijouterie that shone in the shop windows. At the end of the promenade a large and very bright café. The people sate under the trees, or walked up and down. Pretty dresses, and cavalry uniforms glancing by.

Beyond rose the tall masts and rigging of the vessels at anchor.

Each little table had its own coterie.

"Oui, j'adore la valse," simpered the younger of the fat sisters to a French officer. "C'est la poésie, c'est l'amour, c'est——"

But suddenly the old shade of anguish fell upon her face. At another table Two with an impressive gendarme settling on the spot a passport difficulty.

"Pardon—je connais un homme——"

And at the door a very tall general of artillery, who was staying at the hotel with some of his staff. He had been particularly attracted by Gyp, who was balancing on his hind legs, with pyramids of sugar on his nose. Then the conversation turned upon the accident.

"Et nous étions quarante-cinq minuits dans l'eau," said Bow.

"Comment, monsieur," said the amazed General, "quarante-cinq minuits?"
"Oh! oui" (pointing to Stroke), "demandez-lui vous-même! un très-beaucoup temps, n'est-ce pas?"

We sate a long time chatting with a very pleasant English family—a clergyman from Leicestershire, his wife and daughters, with whom we became great friends.

They had heard some amusing accounts of the wreck. Their maid had been told of a report about the town, that we had been trying to "rock the boat in the ocean," and had succeeded. Again, that the terrible barre had overtaken, hurled us from the boat, and swept us up to near Rouen.

So lingering on, till our somewhat eventful day came to a close.

It felt strangely long since that morning. Almost as if we had dreamt of the market at Caudebec—its picturesque peasant girls crossing in the ferry boats—Tarapatapoum shouldering his musket and marching by the dead body of Moustache.

We took a very long time getting up to our room—for the unwieldy sisters had a short start from the foot of the staircase.

The old general stood at his door for a moment—
"Quarante-cinq minuites! Diable! il a raison—c'est bien longtemps."
CHAPTER XIV.

WE PULL THE BOAT UP TO ROUEN—THE RUDDERLESS COXSWAIN—LA BOUILLE—THE ÉTUDIANTS AND ÉTUDIANTES—"OH! MADEMOISELLE, JE JAMAIS"—MICHEL!

It seemed to be the general impression that our tour was at an end—or that at all events we would have the boat sent up by steamer to Rouen, and not venture again in such risky water. But starting in the early morning, we had a long drive through the country roads that led to St. Martin de Boscherville. Down through the little village with the beautiful abbey church, and by the narrow lane that took us to the ferry. It had been a bright morning—but oddly, as we came to the river, it began to grow wild. Not so black as the day before, but enough wind to make it dangerous.

There was no one to be seen.

Shouted and halloed, but no Jean Baptiste le Caux.

The island was a long way. Then we set to ringing the bell—but the wind was in the wrong direction.

Waited half an hour; and then slowly round the island
came our man. We had told him, of course, that we would arrive at "five in the morning, old fellow," but it was now twelve, so he had given us up.

Ferried to where the "Marie" lay. She was sound and uninjured. Four or five men had come from an inland village to look at her—having heard an account from a solitary passenger by the ferry. We were in a sad difficulty about steering; and J. B. had seen nothing of the rudder. We asked three men severally to come as coxswain and tell us the course, and to save the constant trouble of looking round. But one and all declined.

We offered a napoleon and dinner.

To such people the sum was enormous, and the temptation well nigh irresistible. For a time one tall red-haired fellow hesitated—said he would go and put on his fête clothes.

Then looking once more at the boat,—

"_Eh bien, non! j'ai une femme moi_—"

And each had excellent reasons for being tenacious of life.

At last the oldest of them, a fine old fellow over seventy, as if ashamed of the rest, plucked up a huge courage, came down the bank, and got in. He never in his life had so little to sit on, and he didn't know at first where to put his legs. But once settled, he began sneering
at the others for their cowardice. Then assuming an air of command,—

"Quand je tiens la main drouwaite comme ça (elevating his right hand) vous allez à drouwaite—n'est-ce pas?"

Yes; we understood that perfectly, and prepared to start.

"Arrêtez! il y a quelque chose encore! Lorsque je tiens la main gauche comme ça (suiting the action), c'est différent—n'est-ce pas—? Alors—vous allez à gauche! En route! Marchons!"

We grasped hands heartily with old Jean Baptiste, but for whose timely assistance there might have been a different end to our story. The old fellow was loth to accept what we forced on him, as a most slight recompense in return for perhaps a life.

"Adieu, messieurs! et Dieu vous garde!" and the four oars dipping together, we shot away under cover of the bank. There was a mimic storm raging in the middle of the river, and much as we wished to get the full strength of the current, it was more than we dared encounter. We felt at once the lightness of the boat, in the absence of the luggage, and her increased speed. A boy came out from a solitary cottage we passed, and tried to keep up running along the bank. But even with the little tide we had, he was left almost standing. We had to hug the shore closely—almost within an oar's length—and as it was we
once or twice shipped water. The bend of the Seine between Duclair and Rouen is enormous. By land the distance is only seven miles—by the river it is exactly thirty-six kilomètres, or twenty-two and a half English miles. Though one would wish it longer, on account of the scenery, and the never-lessening interest of the journey.

Michel, our antique coxswain, was very pleased with his mode of travelling, and, above all, with the pace.

"Elle sait marcher—n’est-ce pas?"

His right and left hand went up and down like the figures on street organs. At such times he would neither speak nor be spoken to. He was the man at the wheel, and not to be approached. But the crisis over, he was again chatty and full of anecdote.

"Found out the names of the fat sisters this morning," said Three. "What do you think they are? You’d never guess—Hermia and Imogene. Imogene’s the young flirt, but the maid calls her by her pet name—Miss Blossom."

"Delicate allusion to the nose," said Two.

"Well Bow, old man, I congratulate you on your conquest. She certainly suffered martyrdom for your sake during dinner."

We were still in the midst of the same solitariness and grandeur. But it was the last, of the sea river.
Then we came upon La Bouille.

"Toutes les fois que je viens ici," said Michel, "ça me fait sourire!"

He was right. There was an unmistakable expression of laughter about the place. A delightful little town, and as picturesque as you please. Just in the bend of the river, with two magnificent views, and a vast lake at its feet. Above it big hills—so steep, that the houses seemed to cling to the sides—stretching away to Moulineaux, a few miles further on.

An excursion steamer had stopped, and the passengers landed.

They were as bright as étudiants and étudiantes from Paris—and the pleasant sound of their voices rang over the water.

The neatest of old-fashioned inns, close to the landing-place, with pretty trellis-work and little white tables. There was a balcony and a wooden stairway on which they sate, clustering like bees, and pic-nicked on peaches and red wine. Others were swinging in a gay garden that stole round the little inn.

The wooden balcony opened into a large room, and as we landed, a burst of music broke out, and there was the sound of dancing.

"Strauss, as I live," said Two; "the only waltzes in the world worth dancing to. Makes one long——"
“Voilà des Anglais qui n’ont pas l’air triste,” from a girl’s voice on the balcony.

We looked up. She smiled—and a long-haired student bowed with much grace.

“Est-ce que ces messieurs ne dansent pas?”

We glanced at the crowded stairway; but clambering on to the balcony, swung lightly over.

With mock gravity we were presented to two laughing blondes.

“Messieurs—permettez—”

“Madame la Baronne de Rire Sans Cesse—La Comtesse de Brise-Cœur!”

On our side—

“Veuillez, Monsieur, présenter à ces nobles dames—”

“Sir Fleet Street, Vicomte Connais-Tout-le-Monde, &c., &c.!”

Then another student, who would have graced the Academy, dashed a wild new life into a trembling piano far in its dotage, and played two brilliant waltzes, known everywhere abroad, though scarcely in England—“Vibrationen” and “Pulsationen.”

“It’s something more than beautiful,” said Two, breathless with many rounds. “After all, what luck it was being drowned yesterday. We should have missed all this. Dance? I never knew what dancing meant before.”

“Oh! mademoiselle, je jamais—do tell the Baroness,
like a good fellow," said Bow, "how I'm enjoying it——"

But Michel's head appeared at the door.

"Moi aussi—j'ai une femme chez moi!"

Poor old coxswain—we were forgetting that when we should arrive at Rouen, he would have a long way to travel back to his wife.

At the same moment the bell from the steamer rang out.

In five minutes we were in our boat, racing her for a couple of miles, and getting pelted with flowers and grapes by Rire Sans Cesse and Brise-Cœur. The tide had turned, and the steamer was asthmatic, and after the next station we saw her no more.

Michel somewhat reproached us for lingering so long avec ces farceurs. Too late now—but he would have shown us the wonderful stone quarries at Caumont, which we had just passed—and taken us to la grotte de Jacqueline, paved with yellow stalactites,—and the little lake of transparent water.

We left a long line of yellow cliffs behind, and came to Moulineaux, a very pretty but poor village, at the foot of a great hill, where stand the ruins of the castle of Robert le Diable.

Michel told us of a curious tradition.

The ruins are almost overgrown, and in part concealed by wild shrubs and vegetation. Whoever touches these
shrubs with his foot is doomed to walk for ever like the Wandering Jew, without finding his way or the end of his journey.

At Grand-Couronne the Seine opened out once more to a vast bay, dotted with little villages. From thence it wound between the two great forests of Rouvreux and Roumare. The latter, where Rollon hung his famous chain of gold on the branch of a tree, and left it for three months, no one daring to touch it.

Still prettier as we reached Soleurs, its white cottages and church half-hidden in the trees. Then continuous groups of picturesque rocks up to Grand-Quevilly, and in the distance conical hills looming out boldly.

At last the iron spire of the cathedral and Rouen about five miles ahead.

On the borders of the Rouvreux forest Petit-Quevilly, where the old Dukes of Normandy used to have their hunting-lodge, and not far from the site of the château and park built by Henry II. of England, given by him afterwards to the Carthusian friars for a monastery. The old church till very recently was used as a granary—the interior still decorated with the fantastic figures common to the early centuries.

As we neared the city, the heights of Bapaume and Canteleu rose grandly above us, covered to the water's edge with rich villas of the Rouen merchants. From here
the river Cailly, feeding numberless factories in its course, wound its way through the big shadows of the Valley of Déville.

Then from the silent river, we shot in with long strokes through the crowded shipping, and pulled up seventy-eight miles from Hâvre, between the two bridges.
CHAPTER XV.

THE SQUIRE—THE ÉCOLE DE NATATION—"VOILÀ CINQ ANS QU’IL TRAVAILLE COMME ÇA."

A loud halloo from the quay!
"The Squire, by all that’s impossible!" said Three.

We eased up at a little island beyond the second bridge,
made the boat fast in a small creek formed by a barge and the shed of a boat-builder, under the wing of two sentries, jumped on shore and shook hands heartily.

"Been watching you for the last mile or two," said the Squire. "Knew the 'Marie' the moment she turned the point, though there were lots of boats practising for the regatta. No mistaking the old swing. She looked very well that last gallop! There was a telegram in Boulogne about the swamping, so came over to see if you were all right."

And wouldn't even wait for dinner, but left by the next train. He was one of those people who delight in travelling for travelling's sake, and would have gone to Bombay in a slow sailing vessel, simply to take the return boat back again, without even landing. But we felt his kindness deeply, for in reality he had come the long journey to bring important intelligence to one of the crew, and only hurried back through the same kind motive.

There was an école de natation on the opposite side of our island, and long platforms with eight or ten feet drop, to take headers in the Seine. If there was one hour more than another looked forward to, it was this, when the day's rowing was done and we could enjoy a long swim. A lower and upper terrace of closed sentry-boxes did duty as bathing cabins. Two little wickets where you took billets respectively of an old man and old woman, for the bath and for the costume. A third wicket where you were
under a moral obligation to give *sous* to a man, for no perceptible reason, except that he chose to stand there. In the interior, small pools, or floating baths, of two or four feet in depth for non-swimmers.

We had donned our "costume," and were preparing to plunge, when we were stopped by men with ropes. They wanted to tie these ropes in a slip knot round one arm.
Indignant resistance!  
No use. It was the police regulation for all who could not swim.

We assured them of our powers—offered to take our oath on the matter.

They would accept no evidence but that of the rope.

So many had said the same thing, and had deceived them—gone to the bottom and never returned.

They recalled it as a personal injury.

It was very humiliating, but we were obliged to submit.

Once in the water, we slipped the knot, dived under the platform, and watched them pull up the rope.

But they were satisfied we could swim, and didn’t call in the sergent de ville.

While dressing, we remarked two veteran baigneurs, or swimming masters—with beards like the old Imperial Guards—standing near, smoking their pipes. We happened to ask them for a towel or something.

"Pardon—demandez là-bas! Nous attendons notre Monsieur!"

Later on we had occasion to ask again; but received the same answer—

"Nous attendons notre Monsieur!"

And presently down the wooden steps, and through the narrow wicket, came a very short and absurdly fat man.

The two baigneurs saluted.
He squeezed with difficulty into one of the sentry-boxes, and in ten minutes emerged radiant in bathing drawers of defiant red.

He also wore swimming sandals, and on his bald head an oilskin.

"Must see him go in," we said. "What a hole he'll make!"

But he went no further than the middle of the platform. There the two baigneurs received him.

There was a wooden stump about two feet high. Bending slowly down, he balanced himself on his chest. We looked on amazed.

The baigneurs on either side, seized hold of his hands and feet.
With slow and deliberate motion they made him strike out with the action of swimming; and this went on for a quarter of an hour, till the perspiration rolled off him in great drops.

"He'll be awfully hot to go into the water after all that!" said Bow.

But the swimming lesson was over, and he moved towards his cabin.

"Eh bien! ça va mieux aujourd'hui, n'est-ce pas?" he asked.

"Ah! dame! j'ai mon idée," said the baigneur.

"Et ça—"

"C'est, que vous faites un progrès admirable!"

Beaming with complaisance, he went in to dress.

We called the baigneurs aside.

"Does 'notre monsieur' practise like that often? He must have great perseverance!"

"Persévérance——? Voilà cinq ans qu'il travaille comme ça—et jamais il n'a pas été dans l'eau!"
CHAPTER XVI.


"Do keep on arguing," said Bow, sketching as hard as he could; "I want to get the old woman's face—group and all."

It was the following morning, and we were in our room, having fearful words with a muscular blanchisseuse, who had brought back what had once been our white flannels, dyed a jaundiced yellow, with dashes of gay piebald. They were very painful to look at, and we had nothing else to put on.

Worst of all we were in bed, and had to argue at a disadvantage.

Then we were no match for her patois.

She vowed it was the paint from the boat—we said it was her ignorance.

She grew red in the face—and abused us.
We refused to pay.

_Eh bien!_ She would summon us before the _juge de paix._

All right; we'd put the four _pantalons_ into the witness box.

But we were getting the worst of it—till Alexandrine came in.

_Then_ there was a battle—Greek to Greek! We didn't understand a word—but it was beautiful. Alexandrine loyally on our side.

The _blanchisseuse_ suddenly subsided—pretended to give in—and we fancied we had won the day. But she went quietly down, got the landlord to pay her, amongst other bills he was settling on our account, and we saw her no more.

It was a _coup de maître!_

We had intended staying but one night at Rouen, but so many things had gone down, and the loss of our rudder necessitated telegraphing to London for fresh supplies.

Then a new misfortune happened.

We found we had what was called sunstroke on the arms—a sudden swelling and stiffening, with acute pain and inflammation.

But from the day we left Caudebec there had been no sun.

We had to see a doctor, but were in reality cured by a
very old woman, who lived up a narrow staircase, in a dark oak-panelled room, with curious carving and quaint ceiling. Looked as if it had formerly belonged to an old palace. She was more savante than all the faculty, and cunning in the use of herbs. After three or four days we were well again.

Meanwhile, we wandered about Rouen, or went up on the heights to look down on the wonderful old city, between the double chain of hills.

Half-way up the ascent, on the Neuschâtel road, there is an old lime-kiln on a slope to the left. It was known in the last century as the site of the robber’s gibbet.

For a view that is simply marvellous, this is the spot to stand.

The enormous valley of the Seine, backed up with a grand horizon of sombre forests. The river, with its endless windings, for long miles on either side.

A far perspective of glistening villages and white towns. Nearer, huge manufactories, and little busy rivulets, dyed with many colours, threading down the hills to the big river. At your feet the glorious capital of ancient Normandy—the capital that made kings and was itself almost a kingdom.

As you would read a poem, you may read the history of Normandy in the streets of Rouen. But the pages are being torn out one by one, and modern boulevards and
new squares are crawling stealthily as if to crush out the beautiful old houses that never can be replaced.

There is one close to the Cathedral—a charming relic of the 15th century, and resembling the delicate chisellings of a Florentine sculptor.

In one narrow street you read: "Fontenelle est né dans cette maison le 14 février, 1657."

In another: "Ici est né le 6 juin, 1608, Pierre Corneille."

Not far off the Tour du Donjon, the last that partially exists of the seven towers belonging to the château, built in 1205 by Philip Augustus. Within it Jeanne d'Arc was confined the night before her execution. It is rarely seen, for it is now enclosed within the walls of the Ursuline Convent.

Six-and-thirty fountains, the same as the number of churches before the revolution. Some are very pretty, particularly the Fontaine de la Crosse, which is of Moorish fashion. Also that of the Grosse-Horloge, close to the old gate-way, where the couvre-feu still tolls every evening. This one is fed by the source de Gaaler, the oldest in the town. It has been flowing for more than 600 years.

Sometimes alone, at others with our friends from Leicestershire, whom we found charming companions, we rambled through the labyrinth of narrow streets and quaint houses,
more than among the stately buildings and bigger lions that, somehow, in all old towns have such a marked family resemblance.

The ladies came down to see the boat, and managing to borrow a rudder, we had a sharp spin under the two bridges, the father, one of an old Eton eight, steering us.

They asked us to come up that evening to their salon after dinner. There was a piano, and we should hear a little music.

Bow at once went to have his hair cut.

"Would Monsieur wish to have much taken off?"

"Oui! Beaucoup!"

He didn’t know French coiffeurs, or he would have been more cautious.

Deep in the "Petit Journal pour Rire," he never followed the weird strides of the shears, or once looked up, till all was over.

"Oh! mon Dieu!"

He had been quite shaved, and his cap fell upon him as on a walking-stick. There was not one particular hair that you could have laid hold of with the tiniest of pincers.

It was a pleasant evening, and we heard some pretty music.

"Would you like a ballad in Lancashire dialect?" said Two; "only it’s rather touching, and generally makes people cry."
He sang, as he always does, well. There were about twenty or thirty verses, and in the middle he stopped, unable to go on, so affected was he by the subject. Unfortunately no one understood the dialect, and without a book of the words, it was embarrassing not to be able to come in at the right place with murmurs of sympathy.

"Ah, I know a fellow in a coal pit, can sing that song. That's where you should hear it, too—the very place where it happened!"

The next day our friends left, much to our regret. It's not so often that one meets English people who are attractive out of their own country. One marked exception we encountered in an ex-Colonel of the Grenadiers, who, hearing of our losses on the river, placed, with charming generosity, his wardrobe at our disposal, and amongst other things, made us a present of a large quantity of English tobacco, the value of which, only those who, like ourselves, had lost their own, without being able to replace it, could thoroughly appreciate.

We were deliberating as to the probable day our things would arrive from England, and we should again take to the river, when we received an invitation to breakfast from a friend of Three's. Monsieur A—-

There are breakfasts and breakfasts. This one was a poem.

The table was a garden of flowers and delicate Dresden.
Like a Watteau picture against the dark velvet hangings and oak furniture. How often we quoted in later days the “potage à la bisque,” “laitance de carpes,” “sautés de foie gras,” “vin de Madère,” “Montrachet,” and that bewildering “Trappistiné!” Above all a host whose graceful hospitality no one would be likely to forget, who expressed his regret that he had not known us in time to beg we would make his house our home during our stay in Rouen. And insisted then and there that we should spend the remaining three days at his château in the country. A special card for Gyp, who, by the way, had never forgotten the acrobatic dogs at Duclair, and was now practising in a solitary corner a new edition of the great sugar feat.

We accepted cordially an invitation so welcome, and as we were to start that afternoon, went back to the hotel to make arrangements.

On the way Two started suddenly into a shop, and re-appeared with subdued triumph, carrying a small tin box.

“Knew I should find it out sooner or later,” he said.

“What was it?”

“That was the very question,” he said, “we all asked one another at Duclair, when those fellows from the yacht had gone to bed. Do you remember their distress when they fancied they’d lost it? Do you remember ‘dans la nuit j’ai tant souffert’? Well, I’ve tant souffert the last
two nights with mosquitoes and the other members of that family.

"You see, by pressing this spring, an invisible powder shoots out, and there you are. It's called the ‘Terror,’ or the ‘Silent Unseen!’ The man said you'd be safe with it in the Pyrenees or London. A little big, perhaps, to carry about, but—‘on va dormir en paix!’"

An hour and a half by train took us to Alvimare, a commune of the Canton of Fauville, and some thirty or forty miles from Rouen. Very pretty but wild country, and right in the heart of Normandy. It should have been called the station of roads, for never was there such an extraordinary number converging to one point. Such a lonely place too—scarcely a house, and not a vehicle, or even foot-passenger to be seen. Only a rendezvous of roads, big and little; highways and byways, as if, having done their work a long way off, they had come up here for a little repose. Monsieur A—— met us at the first village, where one solitary diligence stopped, and drove us by the woods of Ste.-Marguerite to the château.

It was evening, and beyond the dark shrubberies that fringed the park, long fields of golden corn glowed in the sunset. There was a welcome from the freshness and stillness of the country doubly grateful after the streets of the city.
The château was a handsome square building, with stately terraces.

In one wing, four rooms quite apart and en suite, were prepared for us. Had they been built for the express purpose, they could not have been more delightful.

Already, Two began to find the "Terror" rather in the way. It was not the sort of thing to leave on a dressing-table, for its very presence expressed mistrust and suspicion. Its many angles and sharp projections made it cumbersome to carry in one's pocket, and the least pressure on the spring produced a faint hoarse whistle. He sate on it once during dinner, in a pause of conversation.

Every one looked up.

"Ah, monsieur est siffleur! J'aime beaucoup cette musique! Avec l'accompagnement du piano c'est ravissant!"

There was a large family réunion, many of whom had come from long distances. It recalled the "Jour de l'An," the great household fête-day in France, so pleasant to witness.

Monsieur A—'s son-in-law and his wife arrived after dinner.

"Mon gendre, messieurs!" and we were formally presented. But, in the general introduction, Bow fancied the name was Monsieur Gender, and so addressed him during the evening.

After the drawing-room, there was an interesting game
of billiards between the son-in-law and Bow. They ran neck and neck, and at the finish it grew quite exciting. Bow played for a final cannon, which would have given him the game. His ball struggled on, but, in billiard parlance, it hadn't enough legs. He lost!

"Ah, Monsieur Gender—pas de jambon!"
The next morning was Sunday, and we went to a very old church, which was on the borders of the park. There was a large crucifix suspended from the roof, at the entrance to the sanctuary. On its arms perched some half-dozen birds, that flew about and sang all through the service.

There had been one, a little wild sea-bird, that had strayed inland, and was found by the children beating its wings against a window. In a short while it grew tame, and would eat from the little ones' hands, as they passed home from school.

It perched always on the head of our Lord!

After a time it sickened, and one evening, coming down to the children, it would take no food, but went back to its old resting-place. And when they came again, it lay there dead!
Hi-ther from sea-shore far a-way, A lit-tle sea-bird came one day;

The children found it beat-ing vain Spent wings a-against the win-dow pane.

Wea-ry it flut-tered to and fro. And round a cru-ci-fix be-low, Till
sure of pity, love, and rest, It lighted on the Saviour's breast.

With daily food the children came,

The holy quiet made it tame, And when the organ
played, it poured Its praises also to the Lord.

But once they came at set of sun, They found their fond task

past and done; Beside the Saviour's blessed head

The little sea-bird nestled dead...
During the Aspergès, and while the priest passed up the church to the altar, a little child, for the first time putting its feet to the ground, was led close behind him. Amongst the people it was a firm belief that taking its first lesson in such a way, a child would ever after walk well and be quick in its movements.

Said Monsieur A——, "I wish my butler would do the same."

Coming home, we met an extremely old woman. She was the only one among the villagers who had ever before seen English people. But it was a little while ago. "Tenez! it was when the soldiers passed by in 1815!"

Monsieur A—— said the people about had suffered so terribly from the effects of the war, that for eighteen months they had been earning but six sous a day, when formerly they had received 1 fr. 50 c.

On our return to the house, we beheld Gyp on the roof, on the very ledge of the parapet, quietly surveying the landscape and awaiting our coming.
The happy recollections of that long pleasant day!

The rich golden country under a warm sun (it was always bright weather till we were actually on the river), the lazy luxury of rambling only as far as you liked, and lying down to enjoy everything. The appetizing goûter—the perfect dinner; the exquisite kindness of every member of the family, where the grand-mère was a link between three generations. The merry voice of our host ringing out at every meal—

"Capitaine, vous ne mangez pas!"

The evening salut in the little church, when the birds no longer sang, but had gone to sleep on the Cross; the lingering ramble in the rich moonlight; the nightingales in the rose garden—a valse of Chopin, stepping from the soft light of the drawing-room, through an open window, on to the terrace.
CHAPTER XVIII.

WE LEAVE STE.-MARGUERITE—ROUEN—THE CATHEDRAL—THE PILGRIMAGE TO BON-SECOURS—THE 'OLD BEGGAR—WE START AGAIN IN THE BOAT—AGAIN ALL BUT SWAMPED—YACHT WRECKED—WE ARE OBLIGED TO TURN BACK—START FOR VERNON.

Every one had gone but ourselves, and the carriage was at the door. We were only waiting (as usual) for Bow, who was sketching the largest radish he declared
he had ever seen. Strawberries by the way, grew all the year round, so genial was its climate. At last we were ready. "Good-bye." At no time two pleasant words, but doubly regretful when it is good-bye to kindness so overflowing and so delicate, that it would wish to make you feel the giver, and not the recipient.

Not content with the charming hospitality at Ste.-Marguerite, Monsieur A—— would not suffer us to return to our hotel, but most courteously placed his town house at our disposal during the remainder of our stay in Rouen. Our first visit was to our little ship.

The boatman said she had a flow of visitors; amongst others the crews from Paris and elsewhere, who had arrived for the Regatta. They admired her greatly, wondering at a boat combining such delicacy and lightness, with such great solidity. The new rudder had come from Teddington, but in an unfinished state, and had to be remodelled and adjusted to the proper size. The "Marie" too, had suffered more than was at first apparent from a great wrench in her bows, and the carpenter was hard at work planking over an open seam. Once again we visited the "bains," and there again was the old gentleman, in the red caleçon, in precisely the same position, taking his swimming lesson on the wooden stump from the two solemn baigneurs.

A long header in the Seine, this time without the
martyrdom of the rope, was pleasant after a long journey, and the heat and dust of the roads.

A chef-d'œuvre of a dinner from Monsieur A.—'s cook, again framed in flowers and china, was a not unappreciable contrast to the hotel.

Strolling through the town we came suddenly upon the glorious façade of the Cathedral. I think nothing but music could describe how that façade looked by night, for in music there is a heavenly subtlety that no other art can ever hope to possess, and it is beyond the power of words to tell it.

It was more like a beautiful mist wreathed in ghostly network and unearthly tracery, than a tangible reality. It rose like a dream from the deepening shadows, straight into the moonlight, till the fading towers and spires were lost mingling with the night.

A vesper and salut de pénitence were just concluding, for it was the eve of a special pilgrimage to the Church of Notre Dame de Bon-Secours on the hill, and as the huge doors swung open, the pedals of the great organ trembled with delicious vibration, under the massive harmony of the old plain chant.

We were anxious to catch even a glimpse of the pilgrimage, and did almost get up early next day, to clamber up the deep sides of the Côte Sainte-Catherine, under a pitiless scorching sun. Well repaid, however, by
the surprise of the superb view that opened out on both sides of the hill. At first sight it would seem that nothing could approach the coup-d'œil from the tower of the Cathedral, or from the old limekiln on the Neufchâtel road. But there is a special charm and distinctive feature in the view from the Cemetery at Bon-Secours, that grandly compensates for the ascent of 380 feet.

Gyp was recovering his spirits, which had been somewhat depressed since the death of Moustache, and appeared delighted,—as usual, attracting our attention to many things on the way-side, that might otherwise have escaped notice.

When Gyp is interested, either in landscape or individuals, he invariably comes to a dead stop, and points after his own fashion, by sitting down and critically contemplating the object till he is thoroughly satisfied.

His first point on this day was at a very old beggar, well known for many years half-way up the grande route to Bon-Secours.

A face so old that it seemed half worn away, and part of it gone before him.

Blind! and the sightless eyes sunk far back deep behind the bones.

More like the shadow of a beggar, than a still living being.

A cap far back on his head, a blue blouse, and—possibly
on account of its being a fête-day—a small clean white collar.

He sat on a low stool on the road side, and in his wasted, shrivelled hand he held a little tin cup, shaking it with a regular measured clink, and singing in a low plaintive note—

"N'oubliez pas le pauvre Aveugle!"

A little further up the hill, there was a large open grating, at the foot of a garden bright with flowers. Close to the railing, there sat an old couple, with a young child between them. She looked painfully delicate. A small table was placed before her, covered with toys and confitures, and it was touching to see the eager, loving interest of the two old people in the little white face, that had no longer any childish longing but only for rest.

A sadder though prettier picture than the blind beggar, and Gyp turned with delight to watch the bright dresses and coquette ribbons of the young girls coming up the hill.

High above us, "comme un intermédiaire entre le ciel et la terre," glistened the church of Notre Dame de Bon-Secours. From time beyond recall, there had been an ancient church on the same site, and thither, from all parts of France and from other countries, throngs of pilgrims came throughout the year. It is said that Corneille made it a practice to climb the big hill, en pélérinage, and in thanksgiving, after the success of a new piece.
But the old church gradually became a ruin, and the present edifice, erected by contributions from all parts of the globe, is after the Sainte-Chapelle at Paris, one of the most interesting churches of that style to be seen in France. From its lofty pinnacle, it towers high above the Seine, and in the glory of either sunrise or sunset, the two pictures—one from the river below, the other from the church itself—can be understood by those only who have seen them.

As we stood looking up at it, the deep bell of the cathedral rolled up from beneath, and the first of the pilgrims came in sight.

One by one the different parishes passed by, each headed by the cross-bearer, acolytes, and the Curé. Far as the eye could see, the heavy banners of red and gold shone out against the green of the hill, and the white robes over the red cassocks of the little acolytes sparkled with delicate freshness.

As it was what is termed a procession de pénitence, there was no music, but only singing; and there was also wanting among the pilgrims themselves the brilliancy and variety of colour that is so attractive, for instance, in the great pilgrimage of fishermen at Boulogne. But there was grandeur and dignity, and a solemnity that compensated for the absence of more fanciful surroundings. The hymns were simple, some of them beautiful; and as the
our autumn holiday on french rivers.

pilgrims moved round the hill before the last winding ascent to Bon-Secours, and notes of the "Miserere" stole down at intervals, the effect was at once picturesque and devotional.

But our time was drawing too near to let us remain any longer. The tide, our inexorable controller, was almost at its last ebb, and in a very short time would turn. So with lingering steps and many a look back, we turned again down the steep descent, just as the first cross of the procession disappeared within the great doors of the church.

The day was half sunshine, half clouds, the latter having a very suspicious look of wind. And from where we stood and looked down upon the Seine, we could see through our glasses a few tiny specks of white foam, that were anything but reassuring.

When we arrived at the boat, we found at once, in stowing away the luggage, the great superiority and comfort of Cording's bags, which had that morning been sent from London. They fitted the shape of the boat admirably, and they also looked workmanlike, taking away from the "Marie" a certain expression of awkwardness she had had before. With what changed emotion and almost reverential interest, did Three and Bow now contemplate the "bolster," as they contemptuously called it when they first saw it. There it was—clothes preserver, life preserver, foot warmer—everything that had been predicted of it.
The sense of lightness in the boat also was quickly felt, as we took our places.

We swung down with a still fast tide, and merrily enough for nearly half a mile, but on nearing the first bridge, an ominous shower of spray swept over the boat, and Bow telegraphed the pleasing intelligence that we had shipped our first "spoonful." Close to the bridge the water was more than lumpy, and as we pulled under the arch we found ourselves in almost precisely the same situation as on the day we went down.

A long straight reach of angry water, a strong tide under us, and a furious wind lashing it back.

We were as close to the shore as it was possible to be, hugging for every little shelter, and yet in two minutes the water came in.

We still pulled on, but in less than one hundred yards the boat was half full. The wind freshening every instant as the tide came up, and in the middle of the big stream there was almost a worse sea than off St. Martin.

Two men came running down the bank—sailors both of them—and shouted to us not to go on, for at the bend of the river, whence they had come, no boat, they said, could live for a short minute. This of course decided the matter, and not too soon, for had we stayed only where we were, without pulling on, the chances are we should have sunk. Even as it was, we had to back the whole way up to the
bridge, and steadily through the arch, where the water tumbled in cascades from its piers.

With the memory of our wreck still green, and the serious peril of at least some of the crew, we were very grateful to have escaped a second time. Doubly so when we were told that a cutter-rigged yacht (we wondered if it could have been our old friend) went down bodily the same day, off Sotteville, a short way further on.

And yet never were seen more disconsolate faces than ours, when we eased up once more at the creek.

"J'en étais sûr, Messieurs," said the old boatman, "et vous êtes bien heureux d'avoir la bonne chance de revenir!"

"Oui!" said Bow; "c'est bong—mais c'est bête!"

It was certainly not encouraging to encounter such a series of accidents and mishaps. Up to the present everything had been adverse. Starting with the loss of the "unknown quantity," it was unsatisfactory to pull a four oar, as we had been compelled.

The first day buried in white mist, and torrents of continuous rain. The second, a narrow escape from drowning, loss of luggage, of rudder, and many things necessary to the boat, and impossible to replace in Rouen.

Then "sunstroke on the arms," which, notwithstanding the absurdity of the name, is anything but cheerful, laid up for a week, waiting for things to arrive from England, and very weary of an inaction utterly helpless.
Longing to be again on the river; and when we were ready to start, a fresh outburst of stormy weather—quite unintelligible to the Rouen pilots, who pronounced it to be the most "triste Août" they had ever known.

We held a council of war with them and other knowing mariners.

There were two points for consideration—the long journey before us, and our now limited time.

We had already, although unavoidably, lost so many days en route, that every hour began to be of importance.

The sailors were unanimously of opinion that the weather was not unlikely to continue for the greater part of the week—"à cause de cette lune capricieuse!"—and strongly advised us to send the boat higher up the river—to Vernon or Mantes, beyond reach of the strong flood, unless we could afford another probable delay. Having no possible alternative, with the exception of a second week of idleness about Rouen, we put the best face on the matter—which was not as cheerful as we could have wished—and whilst the remorqueur which carried the "Marie" would be crawling up the Seine about one mile per hour, determined to explore the intermediate parts of the river as best we could.

We chose Vernon for a starting-point, and a train—tout ce qu'il y avait de plus omnibus—took us there in time for dinner.
CHAPTER XIX.

VERNON—THE SLEEPY TOWN—OUR DRIVE TO ANDELYS—THE DRIVER—CAMUS, PÊCHEUR.

It was too dark to see much of the town, but even in the indistinct light, it had a certain stately expression of antiquity, and soft colouring of long avenues and trees that looked promising.

What struck us most was the stillness.

There were fewer people about the station than even at Alvimare.

There was a porter certainly, who took our tickets. He came out for a moment, like the man from the wooden toy-house in rainy weather, but as soon disappeared.

The train stole on, and the station was deserted.

A dreamy old diligence—a lazy horse and a sleepy driver—rambled peacefully to the hotel.

No one to greet our arrival. There was but one person to be seen—a man in red, who might either have been a groom or member of a strolling company in character dress. He leant against a post in the stable yard, smoking morbidly, and took no notice.
The interior was more lively. A beaming landlady, who smiled pleasantly as she bid us welcome, and a remarkably trim maid, full of laughter, and dressed with much prettiness and grace. Down went the everlasting poulet

and canard—fresh logs crackling on the fire—and the delightful bustle of the kitchen.

"This is an hotel if you like," said Two; "beats all the others. Glad I didn't marry and settle down at Caudebec; for, seeing this after, I should have longed to be a widower!"

We were puzzled by the existence of two palatial
salons, that had crept into a small house in the most unaccountable manner, for we never could discover their position, or possibility of getting in, from the outside. They led to four small white-curtained bedrooms en suite, and connected by an old-fashioned balcony.

As a rule, one is awakened in every French village by an army of cocks, who revel in a monster concert while it is yet dark.

Not so at Vernon. Nothing disturbed us till we woke peacefully at a rational hour. One cock—no doubt a young one—crowed once softly, but he never repeated the indiscretion.

We looked out of the window, over the place which the hotel commanded, but it was desolate. There was a Swiss-looking cottage opposite, and through an open doorway we saw an old laundress in the far corner, ironing.

To the right a little shop, and in startling letters, "Rive, Fabricant de Parapluies." There was no one inside, and only one very blue, very old, and very unsatisfactory-looking umbrella in the window.

A few hens were asleep on the counter.

Down the long avenue of trees to the left, an old curé was walking, saying his office.

There was nothing to disturb the echo of his footfall!

The man in red was in the same place, smoking the same pipe.
Repose could hardly convey the expression of the town, or what we saw of it. It was as if it had gone to sleep many centuries ago, and didn’t want to be awakened. In the narrow antique streets, people now and then sate at the doors of the timber-framed houses, or knitted dreamily at the wooden windows and pretty lattices. They would have sold you things in some of the shops, no doubt, if you asked them. In fact, Three did make some purchases, but they were Roman coins so long out of date that the oldest scientific inhabitant, had he been sufficiently awake, would have been puzzled to suggest the possible era of their circulation.

Down one of the quiet lanes was an old massive tower, and very lofty. The church was of the 13th century. The revolution, as in other places on the river, had swept away all its monuments, and left but one, with the date 1610. It was an effigy, in marble, of a lady kneeling—Marie Marignat, wife of the Sieur Marcquenay. Along the aisles, suspended from swinging cords, hung old-fashioned street lamps. The Prie-Dieux and chairs were covered in soft warm velvet, that gave colour and an expression of comfort.

By the river the same drowsy tranquillity.

A charming landscape, and view of the little village of Veronnet on the far bank. Here and there, in a quiet nook, an angler nodded over his rod.
The fish seemed quite awake, for we never saw any caught.

One who knew the town well declared that the arrival of a political journal from Paris, with sensational intelligence, would occasionally send a flutter through the place, but not for long. The following is a description of the Vernon rentier—

"Qui se lève tranquillement,
Déjeune raisonnablement,
Promène son désœuvrement,
Lit la gazette exactement,
Dine et digère gravement;
Puis chez le voisin, en passant,
S'en va causer très-longuement,
Revient souper légèrement,
Rentre dans son appartement,
Dit son Pater dévotement,
Se déshabille lentement,
Se met au lit tout doucement,
Et dort bientôt profondément."

The Veronese are proud of the old Château de Bizy, or rather the present building that has replaced it. They quite wake up to tell you how it was formerly one of the grandest in France, and of the princely race to whom it belonged; how it was wrecked and pillaged, "Mon Dieu!" by the Communist animals of the revolution; rebuilt by General Suir, and after the restoration gracefully yielded by him to the Duchess of Orleans; how Louis Philippe
had selected it for a royal residence, when there came the émeute of February.

There is never need of a guide book if you care to mingle with the peasants. With much listening and a little patience you are sure to discover one or two who have all the old traditions au bout des ongles, and have a fanciful way of telling them that is fresher than all the reading in the world.

All this was told us, only at greater length, by a driver whom we woke up and hired to take us to Les Andelys and Château Gaillard on the river; but it would only be in the intervals of a conversation with his horse, which continued nearly the whole journey.

He reproached him for not going as well as usual.

"Sacre grand-fils de Bismarck, tu ne marches pas comme la semaine passée!"

And when the animal kicked or jibbed—

"Qu'as-tu donc, que veux-tu, pomme-de-terre de Von Moltke?"

Then a torrent of patois, unintelligible to us, but quite understood by the horse.

The jingling of our bells made one or two people at their doors look up for a moment, but before the corner was turned they had dozed off again.

Crossing the bridge we came up with the post cart, lazily creeping up the hill.
Such a cart! A delightful pair of giant rambling wheels, perfectly independent of each other; the body of a gig, that it would be irreverent to laugh at, so remote was its antiquity, dropped down and settled anywhere between the wheels. Thrown back for the present, a capacious hood made of canvas, but painted a dazzling green. Two brass lamps hung far back—"pour empêcher les autres," explained the driver—to prevent any one running into it from behind, certainly not to throw any light in front. A white box was nailed to the splash-board, and in black letters—Boîte aux lettres. It was a two-wheeled diligence as well, and had already three passengers, with abundant room for more. Further, it was a carrier's cart, and carried a host of packages and parcels in the back depths of the hood, amongst them some pots of scarlet geraniums,
that shone with effective contrast against the background of startling green.

The roads were perfect, as they always are in France, and very easy travelling. The old horse didn't seem to take the same view of one or more steep hills that the driver did, which produced increased animation in the conversation, the result being generally the mode of ascending in the appended sketch.

Our road followed the river, and led through pretty villages and past large woods. Outlines of long hills on the right.

At the cross roads, stone calvaries or iron crosses.

One had been fashioned from an old thorn, and had so grown. It recalled Brittany:

"De tout vallon de Bretagne
La croix s'élève vers les cieux."

A bend brought us in sight of Château Gaillard rising grandly above the river, and at its foot Petit Andelys.

Only a fishing hamlet, dotted with cabins and sailors' huts.

"Camus, pêcheur," owned the most important, and the greatest number of boats.

He came out to meet the driver, with whom he was great friends. They embraced, but before further greeting, Camus, pointing to some cantonniers at work on the roads, asked a riddle,—
"Tenez, mon vieux! tu ne sauras pas me dire, pourquoi on les appelle Cantonniers?"

Silence for a moment! Blankness on the face of the driver!

On Camus the anticipation of triumph!

"Parce que, mon roi des cochers, on travaille quand on y est!"

A roar of delight from Cocher, and his insisting on explaining to us, point by point, the exquisite nature of the joke.

Then, resuming the guide's dignity, he dashed in all the historic reminiscences of the place. Told us of Grand Andelys. Pointed out the birthplace of Nicolas Poussin—

"Notre Raphaël français," interrupted Camus.

The statue erected to Corneille. The house of Latellier; Hacqueville, the home of Brunel.

"Et moi," said Camus, proudly, "je connais une personne qui a vu le Thames Tunnel!"

They were proceeding with the records of Château Gaillard and Richard Cœur de Lion, when we caught sight of a tempting glimpse of backwater on the other side of the river.

Unmooring one of the boats, which was large enough for an al fresco ball, but in which a chorus from the bank implored us to be steady, we pulled across to the recess.

It was one of the lovely nooks that so abound on the
Seine, hidden back, away from the great river. A swift stream, in the form of a small lake, rushing over a bed of sparkling sand, and leaping in a crystal cataract under the wooden arches of an old mill. Through its pillar buttresses, flashes of the far river winding through the hills. The mill itself, crushed into the oddest shapes from the weight of age, and windows in delightfully unthought-of places.

The very place for a swim, with visions of speedy luncheon.

In the cool meadows of a second and smaller nook was a bourgeois pic-nic—full of girlish laughter, and singing snatches from an opéra bouffe.

Some of the girls had strayed, and stood under the pillars of the mill, with red scarves twined round them.

At the foot of a tree an artist was sketching the picture. We felt how pleasant it would have been to have shot in here with the boat, and not as every ordinary tourist.

Coming back, the driver and Camus would not hear of our lunching anywhere but at the "Grand Cerf."

To be within a day's journey, and not see the "Grand Cerf!"

"Ah! mon Dieu! . . . n'est-ce pas, Camus?"

But we quite understood what he meant when we arrived at the inn.
CHAPTER XX.

THE OLD INN AT GRAND ANDELYS—THE WIDOW—EUGÉNIE—BACK TO VERNON—OUR RACE WITH THE DONKEY—WE ARE BEATEN.

It almost took away our breath. Bow declared it would drive any artist wild with delight. I wonder what old Joe Willet would have thought of it!

Wide as the difference was in works of art, and old paintings and objects of vertu, there was something that at the first glance brought back the inn in "Barnaby Rudge," and almost made you look round for old Willet in the chimney corner, bewitching little Dolly Varden on the threshold, and young Joe, "with his arm took off in the Salwanners, where the war is."

It would have taken many days to find out, much less describe, all the treasures of the place.

It was more a museum than an inn, only that it had all the comfort of the latter. Out of the courtyard—itself a quaint picture, with its odd stairways, old diligences with golden panels, and flowers in every window—you went up some curiously-wrought steps to the "grand salon." A heavy oak ceiling of rich dark colour, with transverse
beams, one huge beam in the centre; the doorway let in to an oak turret, rising from the floor and disappearing through the ceiling in an open fretwork. A little dash of stained window in an odd corner, through which the sun came, and painted its picture on the dark wall. Just below it a rare clock of Louis XV., and then a host of curiosities endless as they were interesting. Paintings of still life, some of great value. Old Rembrandt and Rubens heads, antique jewelled watches, Eastern daggers, bits of old tapestry, solemn high-backed chairs—but to go on would be to produce, what we all felt at the time, a vague, pleasant bewilderment—an utter impossibility to take in all there was in that room, in such quick glimpses as were ours.

There was a strange fireplace in the kitchen, of which prints were to be had even in Paris.

There was another little salon—more bijou, but of still greater interest and value.

And then the staircase, where you could well spend a long afternoon, up and down its windings—every side of the walls covered with paintings, statuettes, and china—leading to two bed-rooms that were perfectly marvellous.

The first was a nest of wondrous tapestry. On one side a young girl swinging between two oak trees, attended by two courtiers of the time of François I.; on the right an archery meeting, exquisitely worked; on the left a
river landscape, with figures on terrace. Three massive ebony cabinets, standing out against the deep red hangings of the wall; an ebony table in the centre inlaid with pearl and lapis-lazuli; Florentine mosaic, vases of malachite; cabinet pictures that looked like Watteau, Patel, Horace Vernet, and Delaroche; a priceless étagère of Henri II., costly nicknacks, Sévres, Limoges—

"At the risk of irreverence to these wonderful chairs, I must really sit down," said Stroke. "The bewilderment is fatiguing."

"I don't think I should care to wash my hands there," said Bow, nodding in the direction of the dressing-table.

"I hope not," said Two. "A broken jug might stop the boat for a week."

The second room was a repetition of the first.

Whilst we dived into the odd nooks and corners, the landlady came in.

She was in deep mourning.

We did not know till then that her husband had only died a fortnight back, when she was still in mourning for her only daughter.

And so the old inn and all that belonged to it—its treasures and relics of days gone by, were to be sold; and possibly after us no strangers would ever see it again.

Simply, but with the tenderness that only a mother knows, she told the story of her child.
ROOM IN OLD INN AT ANDELYS.
It had always been a peaceful village, far from big cities, out of the beaten track, living its own tranquil life with no greater sound than the big river that cradled it.

"Et ma petite, Messieurs, elle était la perle de la ville!"

The pearl of the village! and every one had gentle thoughts about her, for her sweetness as for her beauty. But the Prussians came down on the village, and the shock was such, that the little one drooped and died.

Tears came down the poor sad face!

And from that time the old delight in the inn was gone, and she no more cared to wander through the rooms, and among the treasures where she had lived for fifty years—"parce que je vois partout, Messieurs, le petit rire gracieux de mon enfant. Tenez! voilà son portrait!"

And pointing to a picture of a fair childish face, she left the room.

And then, almost as if she had stepped out from one of the ebony cabinets (we shouldn’t have been in the least surprised), there appeared the loveliest little face—the property of Mademoiselle Eugénie—who told us luncheon was ready, and would we give ourselves the trouble to descend?

There was never a more brilliant steak dressed in any inn—or such peaches, or such perfect coffee.

But it was distressing to eat with Eugénie waiting.

We would have gladly reversed the order of things. It
was distracting to watch her bright ribbons flashing about the room; to hear her talk, and listen to her musical laughter.

Pretty is not the word!

There was no art treasure in the house to compare with her, and Bow almost went on his knees to implore her for a sitting.

The delight in her eyes, when she demurely consented!

The solemn Chef, and his suite, came from the kitchen, and grouped round the foot of the oak staircase, where the little maid posed herself.

True to his Vernon traditions, the driver was fast asleep in the coach-house.

The servants of the inn had made search for him all over the town, but could hear of him nowhere.

Camus came to the rescue.

"Je connais mon brave, moi!" He knew his man, and unearthed him from the straw.

A kindly farewell from all the household, and a shower of smiles from Eugénie.

As for Camus, pêcheur, and his friend, they had one more roar over the old joke.

We had already rattled out of the archway, and were halfway down the street when a shout of laughter came after us from old Camus.
"Cantonnier? eh, mon vieux?"

"Ah! dame oui," returned the driver; "Quand on y est—c'est ravissant; c'est—" but the clatter of the horse's feet, and the delighted laughter of the two, drowned the rest.

The old horse seemed to enjoy it as much as his master, for he flew over the road home in the bright moonlight, swinging the old trap from one side to the other with the playfulness of a kitten.

But presently, from an old cross road, there came up a two-wheeled market-cart, drawn by a big long-legged donkey.

Three women in white Norman caps, going along at a seemingly easy pace.

The driver just glanced at them, and the old horse turned his head, both with rather a sneer at the humble equipage.

But there was a certain long stride about the donkey, and we remarked it to the driver.

He pretended not to hear, but spoke to his horse—

"Ce coquin de Camus—eh, mon petit—Quand on y est"—but looked furtively over his shoulder, and found the old donkey holding his own.

"You don't allow animals like that to come near you?" he said, sotto voce, to his horse—"allez," and fairly started him at a gallop.
The three women entering into the spirit of the thing, and without using the whip, spoke to the donkey in patois. The effect was magnetic. With swinging strides such as no one ever saw in a donkey before, they brought him up to us hand over hand.

Driver decidedly uneasy, and his amour-propre a little bit touched.

"Mais, soyez fier donc, mon enfant—comme Dimanche, vous savez. Filez donc, sacré cauchemar de Berlin!"

The race began in earnest!

How we laughed! For a moment we left the little cart, and lost it, but the three white caps came up again through the darkness, and the donkey galloping grandly.

For a few seconds we were neck and neck. The driver stood up, calling on the old horse for the honour of Vernon, "et contre cet imbecile de baudet." We all stood up, and cheered and laughed till the tears came. It was no use—! Passing us like an arrow, the donkey went to the front, and we heard the ringing laughter and "Adieu, voisin" of the women as they disappeared in the far shadows.

Poor Cocher! the old conversation with the horse was over—and we only heard him mutter once very softly—"S'il avait vu tout ça, le vieux Camus!"
CHAPTER XXI.

MANTES LA JOLIE—CONTRAST TO VERNON—EARLY PEOPLE—THE CAFÉ—
THE LATE 'DOGS'—"CE SONT DEUX VRAIS DIABLES!"

We went on foot the next day to Mantes. A pleasant walk of about eighteen or twenty miles, and partly following the river.

Half way we came upon La Roche Guyon, one of the grandest and oldest castles on the river. Built over a thousand years back by a baron named Guy, on a huge rock of which it is actually a part: hence its name. The lower rooms are simple excavations. The most ancient part is the big tower high above the château, with which it communicates by a flight of steps cut in the rock.

One room is still preserved, with the furniture and all unchanged, from the time when it was constantly used by Henri IV.

An old family vault, and a small chapel hewn in the rock, testify more than the rest to the extreme age of the original building. The view is grand, both from the great extent and the rapid changes in the colours of the landscape.
Far below the castle, two rows of peasants' cottages were carved out of the soft hill chalk.

Beyond was Rolleboise. From the top of the hill, on which stands the church, the houses and cottages wandered down to the water's edge, one after another, in a loose, irregular manner, with a vague expression of coming down to drink.

Then Rosny, very picturesque and pastoral, with its big château that Sully was rebuilding when Henri le Grand died, and would not finish, for that it should be in mourning, like himself, for so great a master.

The same château where Madame la Duchesse de Berri entertained the nobility of France, and crowned the village "rosière," herself dowering the little maid with a marriage portion.

All this from a boatman, who would have ferried us the whole day for nothing if we had only listened to his stories.

If ever there was a swift change from one place to another, it was from Vernon to Mantes.

We seemed to have barely emerged from the dream-land of the former, before we found ourselves in "Mantes la jolie," "Mantes la riante," "Mantes la coquette," as the people delight in naming it.

From the river you come upon it—leaving on the left the big hills rich with heavy vines—under a boulevard of
demurely-trimmed trees, over which peeped the laughing tops of the white houses.

Up to the ruins of an old bridge, blown up by the French during the war; and a little further, quite
unconscious of its attraction, a new one of wood, but
with already an old appearance, and much too pretty to be
temporary.

A majestic church of the 12th century, with a dash of
Notre Dame about it. "Ah oui," say the Mantes people,
"mais beaucoup plus coquette!"

Pleasant streets, hurrying down to the river, and shops,
with really something in the windows to look at. A few
carriages about, and a sprinkling of neat grooms.

It reminded one of an English country town without
the depression; and the ladies, who were shopping, didn't
look in the least sad over it.

The welcome buzz and motion of a large market.

Peaches a penny each; and such peaches! At Rouen
they were eightpence!

You couldn't help buying from these people—they had
such delicious caps, and were so bright.

In one shop, where the entire crew bought only five
sous' worth of pens, they were as pleased and chatty over
it as if we had purchased the entire stock.

The charming little curtseys, and "Au revoir, Messieurs,"
"Merci, Messieurs,"—the Merci pronounced as only
Frenchwomen can pronounce it, with that indescribable
something about the ci that made you turn back and buy
a lot of things you have no possible need of. In French
shops you are certainly treated as visitors—not victims.
Mantes was a bright busy beehive.

The number of people that crossed the wooden bridge from morn to night—on foot—on donkeys—or in the solemn carts that ambled down from the vine hills!

Such colour too! The blue blouses of the men, and the snowy head-dresses of the women. Now and then a red bodice and a daring dash of yellow 'round the neck. A few uniforms of the old Line, a smart chasseur, and a crew of Dutch sailors who had come down the Oise.

We remarked it was a chosen spot for reading letters. The Norman caps especially. You might have counted eight or ten in one hour—leaning over the parapet, or sauntering up and down, absorbed over pages and pages closely and cross written. Late at night—that is late for Mantes, where most were abed not long after sundown, the last lingerers of the hive clustered in groups of two under the lamps, finding out how long a time it took to say good-night.

The old blanchisseuses knelt on the pebbly beach, under the silver trees, banging the white linen with the unmistakeable thud of the "battoir" that said plainly "I'll teach you to send your things to me!"
Up and down the green slopes came the young laveuses in single file, with long wicker baskets slung from their straight shoulders. They were dressed alike in dark blue, with yellow kerchiefs round their heads.

That evening we came up from the river at a dreadfully late hour. I think it was quite nine.

The last adieux had been long whispered on the bridge. The Gendarme had gone to bed.
Our footfall sounded quite awful in the silent street, and not till we came opposite our hotel did we see a light.

It was in a café, known to be the latest in the town.

All the guests however had left, with the exception of two wild "dogs" who were deep in the distraction of dominoes and eau sucrée.

A sleepy garçon woke up as we entered. He told us in a whisper they were the most dissipated pair in Mantes.

Presently one called out recklessly:—

"Garçon, encore de l'eau sucrée!"
"Oui, Monsieur!"
"Et Garçon!"
"V'ld, Monsieur!"
"N'épargnez pas le sucre!"

The waiter looked at us triumphantly—as much as to say, "I told you so—you now see what they are. "Je vous dis franchement, messieurs, qu'on pourrait bien rester là jusqu'à dix heures—ce sont deux vrais diables!"
CHAPTER XXII.

MANTES—INTERMEDIATE PART OF THE RIVER.

The patois about Mantes is curious. They say "un biau jour." "Quel biau soir"—(or swear).

A conservative people who retain traditions long forgotten elsewhere. The feu de St. Jean—feu de St. Pierre—the Christmas log which must remain over the hearth till after the Epiphany. All the old harvest customs—and the passée d’Août.

In some villages it is curious to see the brides married in mourning.

I asked an old blanchisseuse the reason. She said half-laughingly, "En deuil pour les jours de l’enfance. Dame! ça se peut bien!"

And as they come from the church to their new home, a broom is thrown down against the door. Then there is a subdued excitement to see if the bride will stoop down and pick it up. If she does, she will be a good housewife.

All this time the Neptune (the name of the remorqueur) was toiling slowly up the stream from Rouen. Only eighty miles, and she took nearly fifty hours. We should
have been about half the time. Though some of us had seen the intermediate part of the river and knew it well, it was a source of great regret that the weather had stopped us, even for so short a distance.

Past Sotteville where the yacht went down, and which the French describe:

"Sotteville, sottes gens:
Belles maisons, rien dedans,
Belles filles à marier,
Rien à leur donner."

No one should miss an inch of the river from Rouen to Paris. Though not so grand or imposing as from Havre to Rouen, it is extremely beautiful.

The islands alone, many of them very large, number over 300.

One at Oissel, eight miles from Rouen, used to be a famed stronghold of Norman pirates in the ninth century. Not far is the hunting village of St. Etienne de Rouvray, on the outskirts of the great forests of Rouvray, Elbœuf and la Londe.

From this point you leave the sea grandeur of the Basse-Seine, and come into the pastoral river. In the big channel the current is bold and strong, but there is always a pleasant way to steal up behind the islands, through the shady backwater.

No better place to moor the boat for luncheon than the
gray rocks of Orival. Beginning at Elbœuf, a decidedly manufacturing town, but with two good churches, bounded on the north by the big river, and on the south by a chain of hills that crown the forest—the rocks follow the course of the Seine.

They have a strange fantastic appearance, especially if you pull by them in the twilight. Lofty pinnacles of flint detaching themselves from the chalk cliffs, and rising to a great height. One, the Roche de Pignon, is said to be 200 feet above the river.

And there is a little church nestling half-way up one of the ledges—partly built, partly excavated.

Around it, sailors' cottages dug out of the rock.

The first lock on the Seine appears at Martot, about fifteen miles from Rouen, and ninety-three from Hâvre.

I may here mention, that for the distances on the Seine, as on the Loire, I am indebted to the courtesy of Monsieur E. Boucher, the Inspector of the Service de la Navigation de la Seine, who with the greatest kindness furnished me with a detailed table which will be found later on. We had previously taken down the distances kilométriques from one of the principal pilots on the river, and I find that both tally exactly.

For approximation of relative French and English measurement, it will be found that eight kilomètres as nearly as possible equal five English miles.
Long before you come to the Orival rocks, the Seine revels in the most vagabond winding of its whole course.

It darts off suddenly after Oissel and Tourville, for twelve or thirteen long miles of certainly lovely landscape; and there, as if having seen just what it wanted, comes back within two short miles of the same spot, beginning its upward course again at Pont de l’Arche.

Eugène Chapus tells a curious legend of the old bridge that stood here.

The architect was in despair as to the completion of the bridge within a given time.

One day he invoked the aid of the devil!

His Satanic Majesty didn’t want to be summoned twice, but appeared on the spot, and a compact was entered into.

The devil promised his help, on condition that the architect should hand over his soul the very day the work was finished.

Satan kept his word!

But when it was a question of fulfilling his engagement, the poor artist grew frightened, and began to repent. His sorrow was so sincere, that his patron saint was touched, and by an ingenious expedient pulled him through.

Every night the saint took away a stone from the bridge, now here, now there, so that, though always on the eve of completion, the bridge was never finished—never fait et parfaite. This went on so long, that the
architect had time to die in the natural order of things, and without the loss of his soul.

The remains of the Abbey of Bon Port—so named by Coeur de Lion in grateful recognition of his escape from drowning while following a stag across the river—stand a little way beyond the bridge.

Beyond Pont de l’Arche, on the opposite bank, is the celebrated Côte des Deux Amants. As we pass under the promontory, the author I have just quoted shall tell the story, made famous by Marie de France and the poet Ducis.

A certain king had a beautiful daughter, for whom he destined a noble and rich alliance, when he discovered she was in love with a young lord, poor, and her inferior in rank. Nothing would induce her to betray the faith she had sworn. Then the king declared no one should wed his daughter, till he had carried her without stopping to rest, to the summit of the hill. Her lover made the attempt—reached the top, and fell dead. The king’s daughter died of a broken heart, and both were buried in the same tomb.

During the war, I heard a soldier sing this as a ballad, to an old Norman air, in the wooden camp outside Amiens.
CHAPTER XXIII.

APPEARANCE OF THE "NEPTUNE"—WE STICK IN THE MUD—WALK BACK TO MANTES—ALWAYS GOING BACK—THE HORN AND THE ECHO.

In the afternoon of our second day at Mantes, August 29th, we saw the black smoke of the Neptune, and then the old tug herself, with half a mile of barges in tow, gasping and struggling in the heavy current that swept under the arches of the wooden bridge.

It is almost unnecessary to say that it at once began to rain; but notwithstanding, the good people of Mantes turned out bravely to see us start. Here, as indeed elsewhere, it was firmly believed we could do fifty miles an hour, and that steamers were child's play to us, and it was impossible to remove the impression.

They were, however, like ourselves, disappointed; for the captain would not stop to lower the "Marie," and we had to scramble somewhat ignominiously on board.

"Une promenade sur la Seine à la rame," said a young gamin, ironically. "Dame! ce n'est pas fatiguant!"

We found our little craft carefully stowed in the middle,
looking like a toy against the enormous length of the big ship that carried her.

It must be a pleasant life on board a French barge—a river *chaumière*.

No need for the family to go on land when you see the cheery cabin on the aft deck. Two or more little rooms—one for *salon*, the others bed-rooms, cleaner and neater than many a pretentious hotel. Plenty of room on deck for a mile run without many turns; always the fresh country air, and constant change of scenery, the tempting odour of a fried *rognon*, or the soul subduing fragrance of the coffee that is unknown out of France, provoking the swiftest of appetites without being reduced to the normal condition of Number Two, who was never known to be otherwise than "faint with hunger."

Our barge was even less attractive than others, for there were wanting the touches of a woman's hand. The pilot's wife was not long dead, and he had only his little son on board.

We had steamed about two miles in as many hours. The sun was out again, and we were enjoying the quiet motion, but wondering how slowly everything went by. At last one tree obstinately refused to leave us. We soon found out the cause.

The barge in front had stuck on a sand bank.

Wild efforts on part of the tug only embedded her
more firmly, and in a few minutes we ourselves felt the sound of grating, and the sensation of settling down hopelessly.

They didn't seem to mind it much—only a phase of their river life. To us it was another thing.

It was getting too dark to lower the "Marie" and row on; so there was nothing for it but go ashore and walk back to Mantes.

Our strong point was going back—back to St. Martin de Boscherville after the excitement of a brilliant start from
Duclair and cheers from boat and bank; back to Rouen after another imposing departure and more cheers (after that we gave up cheering!). And now back to Mantes, with the dread of encountering that awful young *gamin*—regular death on going back, as the Americans would say. It was night, however, and we escaped a conspicuous entry.

A dark walk by the river, and half way we passed a man playing on a French horn, practising for the *ouverture de la chasse*, which took place the following week.

He had chosen the wildest and loneliest part of the river, and was coquetting with an echo on the opposite bank—a clear distinct echo, that waited a few seconds and then sent back the air softly and tremulously, with the odd cry of the sharp 4th.

![Music notation](image)

You can imitate the effect, *bouche fermée*.

There is something that always makes one stop and listen to that old French hunting horn. Its very shape is attractive, with the long coils round the body. It reminds you of a good musician, who has but little voice, but makes that little felt; the very wildness and intractability of its notes startling you with spasmodic intervals—"fetches a
fellow awfully," said Number Two, and Two is known for the simple severity of his language.

Long after we passed him, even as we turned into Mantes, the echo came trembling down the water, sadder and wilder as the distance increased.
CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PILOT AND HIS LITTLE SON.

"Do finish that sketch, Bow."

"All right, old fellow. Just one minute more."

That meant another half-hour, and we were standing in the little bureau of the Grand Cerf—the best hotel perhaps in Mantes, but disgracefully dear; waiting for Bow, who was fascinated—even in a print—by a very pretty face.

It so happened that this day was about the last of our wet weather, but it was by far the worst. It seemed to be the final effort of Madame Seine to stop us, and she certainly went to work in earnest.

We arrived at the barges as drenched as if we had swum up. There they were, in precisely the same position as the night before; no chance of getting off. It was
actually cold, and we were glad to warm our fingers at the cabin fire.

We had a long talk with the pilot, asking him to let his little son come with us to steer. We undertook to send him back by train the same evening. For a while there was a long and earnest argument among the sailors, as to the recklessness of exposing a child's life in such a cockle shell. To unpractised eyes she certainly looked anything but re-assuring at this moment. She was dancing on rather lumpy water, and the swift current kept swaying her against the side of the barge, so that we had some difficulty in getting in on our hands and knees.

The pilot, however, seemed to place faith in our assurance that there was no real danger, and above all in our promise to take care of the boy.

"Il n'a jamais voyagé," he said—"pas quitté la maison même depuis la pauvre mère—"

He hesitated between his love and anxiety, and his pride in the boy's pluck.

"Donne-moi la main," he said suddenly to Stroke; shook hands with a big grasp, kissed his little son on both cheeks, and lowered him into the boat. Another grasp, leaning over the side of the barge, as we settled in our places, a look towards the boy, as he said: "C'est mon petit"—this half softly; and then, the old fellow's eyes very wet, a cheery shout, "Allèz, mes enfants, et Notre
Dame vous garde!" and off we set with a long, steady swing, that soon put a mile between us and the barge.

To the last the old pilot still stood where we left him, watching the boy, who, Indian like, seemed too proud to look back. The little fellow was crying too; crying hard; but never said a word. His first day on the river; and the child took his first lesson on board the "Marie."
CHAPTER XXV.

THE RAIN—NOTHING BUT RAIN—GYP GETS US INTO AN UNPLEASANT SITUATION—THE LOCK HOUSE AT MEULAN—THE BACKWATER NEAR POISSY—THE OLD CURÉ IN THE BOAT.

The leaden sky was coming down in a sea of water bullets.

Pattering on the boat with a loud noise, and dancing on our heads and shoulders with playful sting.

"I shall never again let a Frenchman cut my hair in such weather!" said Bow.

Crushing through the thick trees like the sound of a cascade.

The floor boards already under water; but what did it matter? We were back to our river life, and that was everything. We sent the boat along at a pace that laughed at the current.

This delighted the little fellow, who forgot all about his tears.

"Ah! le bon chemin," he cried; "la petite ne dort pas en route!"
Notwithstanding the pale mists that rose from the land and wandered like ghosts on the river, we could see how beautiful the scenery was.

The left bank ascending to long sweeping hills, with soft curves to the wooden hamlets. Spires of churches and old Norman towers peeping out at unexpected places.

We left the main stream, to creep up behind a long island, and had to thread our way through a forest of fishing poles and stakes, stretching across the stream. No fisherman though to be seen; not a soul for miles.

The little man steered well.

After two hours' stiff pulling, we came suddenly upon a weir (barrage), over which the white water tumbled with delicious noise.

Grand to look at; but we seemed to have come to a dead stop.

There was no outlet!

Could it be possible we had taken the wrong way; and was it no island after all? And for a moment Two didn't seem to know a fellow; but his acquaintance never forsook him. He discovered a mackintosh and fishing rod far away under the weir.

"Hallo! mong ammi," shouted Bow, at the top of his grand voice, nearly upsetting the boat in the effort.

But through the deafening roar there only came back, in
inarticulate gusts, "Si vous . . . nager . . . grand danger!"

We now found what it was to have such a boat as the "Marie"; with any other we should have made no headway, but have been driven back by the impetuous current that tore down from the weir. As it was, we could barely hold our own.

Determined to try everything rather than the awful alternative of more going back, we tugged through the surf straight into the teeth of the *barrage*, and at last discovered a narrow opening to the main river, through which a torrent galloped like the "Wild Irish" Mail. The broken arm of a great tree had fallen across, and left only a small passage.

There was but one way of getting through—to back slowly, shorten oars, and keep her head to the current as best we could.

Steadying for the effort, we let the boat go.

Just as we entered, and were holding on like grim death to keep her straight—we felt if she once turned what would be the result—out jumps Gyp on a ledge of broken rock.

No words to express the situation. Close to the broken branch—struggling for bare life between two perpendicular walls—we shouted and implored him to come back.

We dived into every form of endearment—with every
intonation and inflexion of the voice that is used in conversation with animals.

"Here Gyppy, dear,"—"Good little doggy, Gyp,"—"Come, little man,"—"Damn the dog!"

We coaxed—and it's not easy to be tender bucketting with half oars—we bullied—swore at him—promised him oceans of sugar.

He was diving for stones, and came up, wagging his tail, for us to come and play with him.

The boat swayed—something or other gave way—and with a narrow escape of being guillotined, we were shot out into the main river, but providentially without an accident.

The usual humiliating process of getting out and wading after Gyp had to be gone through—and then we found ourselves close to the lock.

We had come eleven or twelve miles, and this had been our first breather against the river current. We were not sorry to get ashore and wring ourselves, for it was like stepping out of a bath. Our little coxswain was blue with cold and shivering painfully, and one of the crew was in much the same condition in spite of the tough work. We produced our pass—a small piece of yellow paper, which costs only two *sous*, and makes you free of all the locks, not only on the Seine, but as far as you may choose to be registered. In our case the "*jaune,*" as the lockmen called
it, opened every gate for over 600 miles. Without it, it would be forbidden to pass the first écluse.

The divine odour of a "pot au feu" came through the open door as a shaggy-looking pilot opened to us. A large dark room, and a glorious fire on the hearth. A majestic pot swinging over the crackling wood, some half-dozen marinières warming themselves, and a pleasant-looking woman bustling cheerfully about the place. She noticed the boy in a moment—discovered that his father was an old acquaintance, and told us he was of the oldest race of pilots, and himself of the longest standing on the river. Made him change his clothes, set about drying them, and scolded him roundly for venturing to object. Helped him the first from the contents of the big pot, and soon brought the colour back to his cheeks. But a change had quite come over the boy since the morning. In a few hours he seemed to have grown—and quite put on the airs of a man. He had made his first voyage on the river, and in a boat unknown to his ancestors. There was a consciousness of superiority as he explained all about it to the older sailors, and took them to see the outrigger. I would prefer not mentioning the number of eggs consumed by the crew. It must have been a severe tax upon the evidently prolific black Spanish hens of the good woman for days to come. And this was only the overture to the more serious part of luncheon. Two was in brilliant form.
"You'll really have to see a doctor," said Bow to him, "when we get back to London: if we ever do get back!" But Bow himself was well to the front. The natives stood round in wonder. When we came to pay the bill, the poor woman gave up the items with placid resignation, and timidly mentioned a sum, which one would have thought could hardly have compensated for the destruction of only one fourth of the crew—certainly one particular fourth. Thanks to the genial fire our clothes were getting comfortably damp, and the mist steamed from us like water spirits.

A racy club of buveurs held their meetings in the same room, and a humorous set of regulations hung on the wall. For a nation so singularly temperate, the rules were amusingly ferocious. "For any member who shall change his wine, unless for a better, imprisonment. For shaking hands with a water-drinker, an amende of 100 francs. For any member who shall be known to touch water, death!"

The sun looked round the corner of a cloud for a minute, but quickly drew back for fear of being observed. A reconnaissance to see if we were really determined to keep up any further struggle with the weather, and then finding we quite meant going on, gave up the contest, and the clouds, ashamed of his weakness, fled and left him. We muffled the little coxswain however in all the rugs, and in a superb old warrior cloak of Number Three, which, tradition said, had belonged to one of his ancestors during the Wars
of the Roses. It was of a chaste though obscure green colour, and in the lining there was an expiring dash of original scarlet. The rudder lines were comfortably lost in its massive folds, and the boy's face peeped over the venerable silver clasp, glowing with pleasant warmth.

There were some half-dozen monster barges preparing to descend as we rose through the lock, and we were not sorry to have escaped their companionship, as the most motherly pressure would have been an irretrievable calamity.

Under a mile from the lock we came to the old town of Meulan, part of it built on the slope of a big hill, and part of it, not caring about the situation, crossing the stone bridge to an island in the river. The prettiest of all the islands on the Seine is found here—the Ile Belle, which used to be called the enchanted island of the Abbé Bignon, librarian of Louis XV. There was an aspect of invitation about it that would have made us stop for closer inspection had the stream been with us, and not against. But we found that stoppages never meant less than an hour, for all the crew had their sketch books, and there was "just this lovely bit of the old church, you know, and won't be a minute"—"I'm only knocking off this simple pump," and "I appeal to you, my dear sir, would any one leave without taking away that old man's head?" And hours were of consequence, in even twenty miles up river. The vine hills following the main stream
are very beautiful here, and rise to a considerable height. They took us on to Triel, whose church possesses the celebrated picture by Poussin—the Adoration of the Magi. It was pleasant to have gone through such heavy rain, if only to enjoy at this pretty village the freshness of the evening that was stealing up. Almost a lake formed by the two bends of the river. "Un paysage calme et délicieux—la position de Triel est charmante."

A little further on, we left the big broadway of the Seine and disappeared in the shadow of a long island running along the right. In a moment we found ourselves in singular loneliness. There was almost a feeling of leaving the outer world, so completely and suddenly were we shut in. There was little more than room for two boats to pass, between narrowing banks of mossy grass. At places the trees all but met in overlapping branches, nodding drowsily to their pictures in the water. At times the stream opened into diminutive lakes, swiftly receding to river avenues. A delicate pink flower grew through the moss, and on the water—and for more than a mile we pulled through beds of water-lilies. The splash of the oars rustling through them was the only sound, so great was the stillness.

After a time we came to an inlet, where an old stone stairway descended to the water from a long-neglected terrace. There was a want of explanation about it, or else
some forgotten story, for it was isolated, and from where we looked there were no traces of a house having existed, or else it had so long decayed, that a wilderness of trees had grown over the site. How long was it since a sweet face of ages ago had stood on those steps, or dropped a tiny glove, wondering who would go back to find it? How old the glove would have been if it had been forgotten till we came by!

Further on under the trees we came to a bridge—a little bridge of deep gray stone, and so perfect, that it seemed a necessity of the place. Massive as one piece of unhewn rock, and faultless in simple but exquisite design. Just the sort of bridge that John Sebastian Bach, or Beethoven, had they been architects, would have built—not in their big hours, but on off evening.

Shooting the bridge, we saw the first sign of life in this silent backwater.

A very old boat, and in it a very old Curé saying his office.

He lifted his hat courteously in answer to our salute, and passed on, the boat dropping down through the lilies, like the calm of his own life.

Then we all but ran down another boat with four or five girls and two good-looking canotiers punting round a corner. They seemed more pleased than frightened, and told us we were close upon Poissy. Soon after we passed
them we came to the end of the island, the main river opening out strikingly on the left, and a charming glimpse of the great bridge of mills. Still keeping to the back-

water we went by some pretty *maisons de plaisance* with gardens and terraces, and threaded our way through a host of pleasure-boats moored across the stream. Floating near the bank was the most coquette wooden house, not more than ten feet in height, but of graceful design, elaborate roof, and dainty windows. A balcony and verandah, hung in flowers, surrounded it. A small steam yacht lay alongside, and we concluded it would be a club-house. Not till later did we discover it to be the public baths of the town. We eased up under the stone arches of the bridge and looked round.
CHAPTER XXVI.


"What a pretty place!" every one exclaimed.

There was a bright-looking restaurant on our right, with a large open verandah and green woodwork.

A crowd quickly assembled on the terrace that skirted the backwater, and a young girl tripping down the steps from the verandah gave us permission to leave our oars and the rest in the house. We thought it looked a most inviting hotel, but naturally following Mr. Murray's recommendation, we sought the Hôtel de Rouen in the town itself. We felt it somehow a little ungrateful after the girl's kindness, and when we arrived at the prescribed hotel, and were ushered into four dark dismal rooms, with visible indications of the horrors of a sleepless night, we rushed from the place precipitately and back to the restaurant.

They gave us four snow-white bedrooms facing the
river, where even Two felt that the "Terror" would never be in requisition.

Then we were punted down the river by an old boat-

man to a quiet nook, and, Gyp included, had our usual evening *piqueur*, as Bow always called it.

Found a crowd of officers on our return, discussing the merits of the "Marie," and making extravagant bets as to
the cost of such a boat. Their notions on this head were about in proportion to the general impression of her marvellous speed; and they estimated her value as at least between 4000 and 5000 francs. They asked us to decide, which we did with pleasure, but no one won, so far were all beyond the mark.

In itself Poissy is not a very attractive town. It is the great cattle market of Paris, has a grand church, and lives on the remembrance of Louis IX., who, as all the world knows, styled himself Louis of Poissy.

Philippe le Bel erected a superb church on the site of the royal residence, and an altar on the very spot where the king was born.

Long after the church and its abbey were destroyed in the revolution, a leaden urn was found in one of the cellars, with the following inscription,—

"CY DEDEN EST LE CVER DU ROI PHILIPPE
QVI FUNDÆ CESTE EGLISE.
QVI TREPASSA A FONTAINBLEAU
LA VEILLE DE SAINT-ANDRÉ M.CCC.XIV."

The baptismal stone of Louis IX. (says Hachette) was saved and placed in the parish church. The renowned market, held every Thursday, and which supplies all Paris, was one of the institutions of the saintly King. There is bustle and noise enough in the town on that day, to more than compensate for the six days of lethargic sleep.
that follow. But though they profess themselves ashamed tant soit peu of Poissy, the Parisians run down to it on Sundays—canotiers and canotières—and punt through the pretty islands, or fish along the banks. The passion for fishing was extraordinary. From the earliest dawn till it was dark they were at it—ladies too, with every precaution of mackintosh, goloshes, and umbrella against unfavourable weather. There was not a square yard along the bank that ran under the long terrace that was for a moment unoccupied. And yet we saw no more astounding capture than an innocent minnow. Of course no fish of experience would venture near the shadows of such a forest of rods.

Another attraction was the little white house of Meissonnier, of whom they are so justly proud, and which stands nearly opposite the church.

The great bridge of thirty-seven arches claims descent from Saint Louis. It is extremely picturesque with its wooden mills—one of these named the Reine Blanche after the king's mother—and the charming view from the centre arch.

But what kept the crew of the "Marie" at Poissy was the extreme comfort of its delightful little inn. We had as yet met nothing to equal it. The kitchen was irresistible, and we liked sitting on the table and dresser, chatting with Louise and Marie as they did something or other with the
onions, and peeled the potatoes. Three (sly fellow) taking lessons in omelettes—and excusing his brilliant failures because he could never find a pan large enough. Old Madame Pomponnine, dropping in with her stitching from over the way—she too had heard of our rocking the boat in the middle of the ocean—and hoping we would never again tempt *le Bon Dieu* in so dreadful a way. Artistic little dinners that would have graced a *chef*. The verandah, to sit and smoke in after dinner, when the lanterns from the old mills flashed across the quiet water.

Opposite to the inn was a large *blanchisserie*, where the girls were dressed in uniform. White dresses, and black velvet-ribbon ties. The first evening, as we strolled by, one of these was singing a Breton song, and the refrain of every stanza caught up by the rest, the ironing and washing still going on. An avenue of trees shaded the terrace walk that from the bridge followed the backwater for some way, till it was lost in the gardens and shrubberies of the river villas. All this was out of the town, which, as we have said, was not at all interesting, and formed a pretty picture of its own in the quiet backwater away from the great river.

We would have left the following day, but that Louise and Marie said there would be a midnight fête in the forest of St. Germain. A fête that lasted three days, and was kept up with unflagging zeal throughout the night.
Already people were coming, some from Paris, and Poissy had its rooms full.

It was the first of September, and it was some amusement watching the sportsmen!

They awoke every one long before sunrise, and paraded the town in numbers. We could see them at Victor the coiffeur's opposite, making a careful toilette—nay, more, having their hair frisé.

"À mon tour maintenant! Un bon coup de fer, Victor!"

The costumes varied, but in one thing they were unique. They all wore startling boots—boots up to their waists—and carried the traditional net bag with a certain amount of gay dash across the shoulder—a bag suggestive of remorseless slaughter. Some were in pure white—others in green velvet and drooping tassels. One wore a red feather in an ordinary hat—another had a formidable couteau de chasse significantly concealed in his waistcoat.

They dropped in to breakfast with already the air of wearied chasseurs—stood the guns (full cock) against the walls—unslung the virgin bags, and talked fierce sport.

There was a dispute as to the existence of a solitary partridge, which one "sportman" maintained was to be found in the neighbourhood.

The majority were incredulous.

"Allez!" he said. "Je connais mon homme, moi! Je sais bien qu'il est là!"
"Comment ça?" said the unbelievers.
"Parce que personne ne l’a tué l’année passée!"

Breakfast over, they crushed a parting cup—slung the bags—shouldered the guns, and clanked heavily through the little room. And then—

"Well, my dear fellow," said Bow, "I watched them. They lounged through the streets till dinner—armed to the teeth (full cock), and with an air of grim resolution—but with the exception of one man, who I know stalked and captured a lark on the island, they never left the town."

Once more to Victor’s, for a final coup de fer before the fête, and as cheerfully to dinner, as men who had come back from the hottest battue.

We started for the fête an hour before midnight. There was no moon, and when we arrived at the outskirts of St. Germain, there was only light enough to make the darkness of the forest depths more intense. We jolted over the soft but uneven turf through tunnels of darkling foliage that seemed endless. Aisles upon aisles of lofty trees, and solemn avenues of oak. Through glades of bracken and brushwood, till we reached the heart of the great wood. Here the fête was held. Festoons of coloured lanterns, swinging from the trees, crossing and recrossing in bright confusion. Carts, char-à-bancs, and country waggons with the chimes from the horses’ bells
ringing at every step as they came through the wood. A gigantic fair with sparkling *boutiques* and gay restaurants. Theatres and puppet shows—whirling merry-go-rounds, and swings far up in the dark branches. Flags and flowers, and banners hanging from the sombre oaks. Organs and tambourines, and stentorian exhortations from the rival stages to "walk up." "*Prenez vos places, messieurs et mesdames—on commence—avancez tout le monde!*

Passing a little wicket, we entered a deeper glade where huge awnings hung under the oak branches, and formed a series of *salles de danse*, covered in and boarded over. One was of great size and tastefully decorated. Flowers twined round the natural pillars and garlands on the walls. Banners of different colours festooned in graceful design and draped with good effect against the white canvas. One of the best orchestras from Paris was electrifying the dancers with a wild quadrille from the "Grande Duchesse." There were over a hundred ranged in two straight lines, the whole length of the *salle*, but they moved as if they were one man, and the conductor's *bâton* was but a dead thing, compared to their reflection of the music. It was the keenest, brightest enjoyment of a music-loving people, who understood the poetry of dancing. You could easily pick out the *étudiants*—the long-haired *étudiants* from the *rue Jacob*. Their graceful lazy indolence, till some figure
pleased them more than another—but still dancing with
the motion of their hands, their head, their very eyes, and
telling you the story of the music. And then when the
pet figure came—to note the thrill of anticipation that
crept down the room during the preliminary bars—the
murmur of approbation that delighted the listening fiddles
—the rush of swift light feet. It was a magnificent
frenzy, but with the most perfect time and unison.
Adolphe, Henri, Victor all but dislocated themselves in
the maddest, wildest gyrations, but with a skill and grace
that was marvellous, and without a trace of vulgarity.
The music and dancing, one charming ensemble. Old as
well as young, and not a few of a more removed genera-
tion. Madame Pomponnine even in her green spectacles
vis-à-vis to Marie and Louise, fluttering in distracting
ribbons.

"Makes a fellow's feet tingle," said Two.

Then we went out to the fair, and slaughtered the
Innocents.

Two long rows of toy figures in a wooden shed, cari-
catures of political and other notorious personages. Five
shots a penny, and if you knocked all five down, a prize of
bonbons, a gingerbread doll, or a mirliton. Bow and Three
went in for this in a manner that astonished the natives.
A huge crowd collected to witness the performance; but
left a respectful space for the muscular swing of the Eng-
lish athletes, who went at it as if they were shying a cricket ball up from long leg. One after another the Innocents dropped with a delicious ping. The proprietor began to think he had fallen among professionals, such was their fatal accuracy. A roar of delight from the spectators when Bismarck went down with a hot one from Three, and Bow staggered Von Moltke with the crash of a cannon ball.

"Put them up again," said Three.

Such wild extravagance at once stamped them as princes. Then the man drew them on cunningly. He told them of a prize never yet won by previous competitors—a case of silver spoons for any one who should bowl over the two rows without missing one. Simple proprietor, he revelled in the anticipation of at least twenty or thirty francs; but he didn’t know Bow and Three. Following one another, they took fiendish aim; and dropping their Innocents one by one they came to the last. On this one hung the prize. The delighted audience held its breath. A miss, and all was lost. It was a poor old woman with a basket of eggs; but a double terrific shot caught her between the eyes and sent her flying off the broken perch.

They took their prizes from the disconsolate proprietor, and meeting Madame Pomponnine fanning herself from the ball-room, we carried off the old lady, with Louise and Marie, to supper under the trees. Coffee and cream and
huge melons; and all the fresh forest fragrance about, and the sweet dewy perfume of the fern flowers. The flutter of birds scared and frightened, and the white gleam of a bewildered owl flashing swiftly by into the forest darkness. Then home through the quiet wood, with the echo of laughter and music dying away behind us.
CHAPTER XXVII.

**La petite en brun—New coxswain—we leave Poissy—Pecq—Asnières—Paris.**

We felt so sorry to leave Poissy, that we only made up our minds to start late in the afternoon. We had sent back our little coxswain to Mantes, and had as usual some difficulty in finding another. No one cared about trusting himself in the boat. Two finally presented themselves; but we chose one on account of his hat. He was an old pilot, over sixty, and had been fifty years on the river.

In the salon next to ours was an engaged couple—a very old gentleman and a young lady in brown. We only knew her as *la petite en brun*.

There was a balcony of communication, and open leads where one sat and smoked.

She came out at times during the morning and chatted with some of the crew; but the antique betrothed didn’t approve, and drew her back—she with a mischievous smile, he with jealous scowl. As we took our places in the boat
and were waiting for Coxswain, she leant over the balcony. We asked, laughingly, if she would come and steer the "Marie?"

"Je le voudrais bien," she said; "mais,"—glancing in the direction of Bluebeard,—"il y a des cir—con—stances!"

The pilot wanted us to drop down the backwater, and so get into the main river; but we chose the alternative of forcing through a narrow arch, under which the current was rushing swiftly. Of course he was right, and we very nearly had a serious accident at starting. The boat,
with the weight of the stream pressing heavily on her, got jammed between two sunken rocks. The crowd on the bridge evidently thought we were coming to deserved grief, and smiled in anticipation of our being obliged to go back after all.

"Ce n'est que le commencement de vos aventures, mon vieux," said a brother pilot cheerfully to Coxswain; but the old fellow took it quietly, while we got into the water and lifted the boat bodily off. We scrambled through, though in no very dignified manner; but pulled away to the admiration of the spectators, who looked upon our voluntary cold bath as rather daring.

Three kilomètres took us to the lock, and we had a merry spin of five or six miles to the big vine hills of Andresy, and the village of the same name on the right bank.

Another short mile and we were at Conflans-Sainte-Honorine and the junction of the Oise with the Seine—a bright, joyous-looking spot, dotted with solemn old barges that came down from Holland, and the bright red caps of the Dutch sailors. We looked with longing at this new river that would have taken us by Pontoise, Beaumont, Compiègne, and La Fère to the Ardennes; but shot on, leaving for another year so pleasant a trip.

We pulled up at a charming island to pic-nic; but broke all our eggs, and found the wine from the corkless bottles flowing gaily under the floor boards. Drifted across to a
little hamlet near La Frette, and were introduced to some friends of the old coxswain who kept a small auberge and improvised luncheon for us. The coxswain, by the bye, caught a fearful cramp from sitting so long in a constrained position.

"J’ai grand mal à l’estomac," he said; but we found repeated doses of Cognac a speedy and soothing remedy.

Passed Lafitte’s celebrated château of Maisons, full of reminiscences of Talma and Voltaire—the most splendid suburb of Paris, and known in the season for the richness and amusing variety of its bizarre toilettes. There is a fish caught here, a kind of eel, and greatly prized by gourmands. It is called the lotte, and we were told of an old proverb—

"Pour manger de la lotte
Madame vendit sa cotte."

Owing to our late start it was evening when we came upon the little village of Pecq. Another capricious winding of the Seine had taken us fourteen miles round the forest of St. Germain, and at the end we were within two of where we started. We could have walked back to Poissy in a short half hour. It was thirty-three miles to Paris by the river; but so close by train that we took it into our heads to run up for the night. We had telegraphed from Mantes for a coxswain, who was to appear in the person of Monsieur Jean Bouroou, a former servant of Three, and to
whom we looked forward as a most valued auxiliary. We hoped to hear news of, or perhaps meet him at Meurice's, which hotel, by the way, no one of the crew cared about, though it had the reputation of being a "good old family establishment."

Our stay in Paris, unfortunately prolonged through the indisposition of two of the crew, we always looked back on as the only regrettable feature of the tour. It was an utter waste of time, and an unwelcome contrast to the freedom and jollity of our river life. Then again our wardrobe was limited to boating flannels, having expressly bid adieu to all other attire for the sake of comfort in the boat; and we were quite conscious of the grotesque effect of blue jackets and white trousers (or rather a glaring yellow, the legacy of that awful blanchisseuse at Rouen) in the crowded streets or down the Champs Élysées.

For this, among other reasons, we always felt less at home in the big towns than in the quiet river villages and wild hamlets.

No signs of our new Cox at Meurice's, but met him the following day at Pecq. We were right glad to see him, for he was one of those wonderful persons who could do anything, was invaluable in difficulties, and, above all, was a bright, cheery companion. We taught him to steer in half an hour, and he accepted the situation as if he had never done anything else all his life. Was
French, too, and knew how to deal with the native "Jack in the Water, yer honour," whose services he repaid with a fifth of what we had been in the habit of giving, and received precisely the same amount of thanks.

Our next pull was still more erratic—twenty-four miles by river to St. Cloud, and the distance by land only three.

"Viens, m'amie, viens, ma blonde,
Viens diner à St. Cloud ;
Viens voir tout le monde,
Et boire le vin doux
A cinq sous."

We kept going round Mont Valérien all the afternoon, and never lost sight of it.

* We had one stoppage, at Bougival, where we avoided the lock (the fifth from Hâvre) by carrying the boat across the island. Pulled up a little way to the bridge, when we found a delightful little Inn for luncheon, and a cosy cloud-blowing balcony.

From this lock we were almost in Paris waters, and the river lost its charm of solitariness. There were steamers flying up and down, pleasure yachts moored along the banks, anglers without end, châteaux, villas, maisonnettes, and, as we went on, increasing signs of life and animation.

Passed the pretty village of Bezons as the twilight crept up, and through the bridge that defines the limits
A COSY BALCONY.
of the departments of Seine and Seine-et-Oise. Argenteuil, where the collar work began to tell undeniably, notwithstanding Bow's self-sacrificing and heroic spurts. Then Colombes, where Marie-Henriette, daughter of Henri IV., and herself a queen, the widow of Charles I., died in poverty at the age of 60. Her body now rests at St. Denis, the old burial place of the royalty of France.

It was dark when we reached Asnières, the pet resort of the Parisians. What in a very mild way Richmond is to London, Asnières is to Paris. Boating, however, is not the only attraction, though the canotage has a certain repute from the number of its followers, if not from any excellence in the art. It is purely an amusement, and nothing more.

Paris goes down to Asnières in the evening to dine al fresco, and paddle lazily on the river that glistens from the reflection of cafés and restaurants on the bank, and from the lights of that bright little island so celebrated for its fêtes and bals bruyants. On fête days the place is one large illumination on land and on water. Every one has heard of the bal cohue, that began in 1848, was several times discontinued, but always re-appeared. It takes place in the grounds of the old historic Château d'Asnières, itself turned into a restaurant, and one of the prettiest buildings in the villégiature of Paris.

Then again, Asnières is celebrated for its fried dishes,
and the guides have a charming expression for this particular delight. They call it the *sincerité de ses fritures*.

There are one or two club houses and boating sheds. In one of the latter we saw a melancholy eight-oared outrigger, of English build. The *gardien*, who was an old woman, said it was never used.

"Ah! non, Monsieur! pas d'équipage pour un tel skeef!"

Housing the boat, we gave instructions to a native boat-builder, not without misgivings as to the result, to cover her in fore and aft. There were yet the unknown dangers of the mighty Loire darkening in the distance, and it was as well to adopt all possible precaution for our little craft, to which for a time we bid adieu.
"Bow, come along to Paray-le-Monial?"

For the English pilgrims, to the number of 1,300, were passing through Paris, and their presence created some little interest. It is not within the province of this sketch to dwell upon the pilgrimage, nor would it be of any interest, following so closely upon the exhaustive and graphic description of the correspondents of the English press. We glance back on it only as a link in our ramblings, and as connecting the wanderings of the crew.

But we record, in common with all who were witnesses, the feeling of deep reverence which it created, and its lasting impression of solemnity.

Bow was unable to come, and the pilgrim train had already gone. We were not sorry from our later experience to have missed it, for it required the zeal of asceticism to stand fourteen in a carriage for twelve hours.
Two, Three, and Stroke bowled down merrily by a night express, and got out about four in the morning, at the little town of Paray. Close to the station was a stone bridge spanning a little stream, which, had we time, would have carried the "Marie" the whole way from Paris, and through the wild heart of the Nivernais country to the Loire.

It was like being back in England, as it was the exception to hear French spoken. The churches were densely thronged all the long hours of the morning, for a pèlerinage from Belgium added considerably to the numbers. In the afternoon there was a procession through the town, and in the garden of the Apparition; and in the evening a second procession by torchlight.

From His Grace of Norfolk, there seemed to be one or more representatives of every Catholic family in England.

"Apart from the devotional character, you know," said Two, as he went through the streets later on, "it's awfully like being in the Park."

Here again our quaint attire was more conspicuous than gratifying. A French child even smiled at seeing such big "voués au blanc et bleu," and an old man, to whom Stroke addressed a question, took off his hat as if he was replying to a vision.

Rooms were not only at a premium, but were not even contemplated. Our training stood us in good stead for
breakfast, and told with admirable effect in the struggle and crush of the besieged cafés. We noticed one pilgrim squire breakfasting at the corner of a street, while having his boots blacked.

The torchlight procession was very picturesque, and the long line of banners shone prettily through the narrow streets. A singular feature was the manly voices of the Belgians, and the perfect swing and unison of their singing.

In the evening, and when dinner was over in the great hall, we listened to the impassioned eloquence of Monseigneur Mermilloyd, the exiled Bishop of Geneva, who possesses in a singular degree the now rare gift of oratory.

Then sleeping anywhere, and as best one could, for a few hours, we rose a little after midnight to catch the early train to Paris. It was quite dark; but early as the crew of the "Marie" thought themselves, when they arrived at the station the train was already packed. People wandered on the platform disconsolate, but we, artfully creeping into an empty luggage van, buried our manly forms in soft straw and revelled in anticipation of a long sleep. Lying perdus as we could we hoped to escape discovery—but our dreams were rudely broken. Two guards came in with all-searching lanterns, and deaf to entreaties as to lavish bribes, made us get out. The train was just starting, the door of a second-class and extremely wooden carriage.
was opened, and we were locked in. There was really not room for an umbrella, and we were no welcome addition to the already crowded occupants, but they bore it like pilgrims, and smiled as we stumbled and fell over them.

Four hours' sitting bolt upright, pining for sleep, your head nodding and drooping by degrees to rest upon your own shoulder, and finding some other fellow's already occupying it.

Moulins about 7 a.m.—and a mighty rush from the train to get something to eat. That was something to see, and none other but a French restaurant could have satisfied such a host of hungry people.

When the train started, Stroke was left behind, and spending six quiet hours in a very comfortable, and all to himself buffet, arrived by a later grande vitesse, in time to join the once more re-united crew at dinner.
CHAPTER XXIX.

BOAT PULLED THROUGH PARIS—MEET FRENCH YACHT—NARROW ESCAPE OF "MARIE"—WANTS TO RUN UP A TREE.

Two was suffering from an ulcerated throat, and Stroke from a disabled hand, the result of a merry puncture by an English doctor, who—let us be just—charged no more than forty francs for the operation.

But it was a week since we had seen our little vessel, and Bow and Three going down to Asnières, brought her up to Grenelle, a little way outside Paris. They started very late, and, as usual, night overtook them, but fraternising with a French crew en route, were greatly indebted to them for useful piloting, for the hospitality of their boat-house at Grenelle, and for sundry mysterious big drinks which they declared perfection.

The next day we called for our bill at Meurice's, and we had rather not dwell upon the recollection. We settled it, and bade adieu to the "good old family establishment," fondly hoping we had seen the last of Paris.

It was arranged that Bow, Two, and Three, with Cox,
should go on with the boat as far as Choisy-le-Roi, six miles the other side of Paris, and meet Stroke, who would have rooms and dinner ready. It was most uninteresting work rowing through the city, and by no means devoid of danger, for the steamers swarmed like flies—(they are called "Mouches" by the Parisians)—and shot down stream so suddenly and swiftly, that you were never sure of an arch till you had passed it. Our new Cox was another non-swimmer. It was his first appearance in an outrigger, and not even the contiguity of the "Morgue" reassured him.

The journey through Paris was so slow and tedious, that it was dark when the boat reached the junction of the Seine and Marne at Ivry, three kilomètres out of the city. There was some difficulty about getting through the lock, so mooring the boat to a barge at anchor, they left her in lonely grandeur in a bed of rushes, and made the best of their way on foot to Choisy.

They stumbled and slipped through what seemed to them long hours of darkness along the river shore—with now and then a collateral stroll across country, led by Two, who "knew a real good thing in short cuts," and the luxury of retracing their steps. Very wet and very tired, but bearing up bravely, picturing to themselves the cozy inn, the bright fire, Stroke's welcome, and a glorious dinner.
Meanwhile, Stroke had arrived at Choisy, and wandered under an umbrella through the very dull streets the long afternoon. Nothing but morocco leather, chemicals, and beetroot in the dusky shop windows. Worst of all, not an hotel or inn in the place. There was a large restaurant, but no beds. With this cheery intelligence Stroke set out again, and wandered along the banks till night came down, getting a little anxious at the non-appearance of the boat, and delighting the stentorian echoes with repeated, "'Marie'! ahoy!"—a lung performance which made the solitary ferryman stare, and look on it as a harmless development of lunacy under an umbrella.

At last a faint response came up the river, and the rest of the crew straggled up in an Indian file.

Very much depressed at having to go back once more to Paris, and a gallop to catch the train which was just departing. A violent altercation between Bow and the guard, who would not allow Gyp to travel with us. Bow withering the guard with caustic irony, but in good old English, which the latter mistook for complimentary language on the graceful and strict performance of his duty.

But not again to Meurice's—not after the little bill—but to the Bedford instead, which only turned out to be from Seylla to Charybdis.

Next day, Stroke's hand being still helpless, the rest made an early start with the intention of getting the boat
as far as Corbeil (thirteen miles from Paris), and the following day to Melun. Two and Three went to Ivry by steamer, but no dogs were allowed on board, so Bow, Gyp, and Cox followed by train.

The two former sighted a man drowning in the Seine—hauled him out, but very nearly inflicted a worse death through their vigorous efforts with the boat-hooks.

Had a short but stiff pull to Choisy-le-Roi on account of the high wind and stormy current, and after breakfast struggled on through very lumpy water to the lock du port à l'Anglais, two kilomètres beyond Ivry. Made acquaintance in the lock with a French crew going on a similar cruise through the Nivernais canals, but in a very different boat. Something between a yacht and small barge, with a roomy deck cabin. Fitted up inside with hammocks, and every possible comfort. It was at once a salon, salle à manger, kitchen and studio. For they were artists, and some charming sketches hung on the walls. They had a sail, and pulled as well, but for the present were attached to a string of barges being towed by a steamer.

The crew declaring they had had quite enough exercise without the help of Stroke's oar, and Two but still convalescent, hooked on to the yacht—found the artists most delightful companions, and spent a pleasant day being towed up the river. Towards night, Two was on board
the yacht, and Bow, Three and Cox aft in their own ship, having a quiet smoke. As the steamer and long line of barges, of which the yacht was the tail, were rounding a

bend, a wild gust of wind staggered, and drove them towards the shore. In an instant the "Marie" was crashing through a forest of thick undergrowth that met the overlapping branches of drooping willows, her iron outriggers cutting the slender branches like scythes, but which in
revenge tore the paint from her sides and the skin from off the faces of the bewildered occupants. It was a marvel how she escaped the thicker and less resisting branches, for any one of them would have broken her to pieces and swept the crew overboard. As the barges swung further round, she plunged still deeper among the trees, and was driving straight for a massive clump at the rate of five miles an hour. She was close upon it, and the danger was imminent, when one of the yachtsmen with great presence of mind cut the tow rope. Up shot the boat with a wild notion of climbing the tree, and away went the steamer, barges and yacht. For the captain had no notion of what happened, and was not even aware that the "Marie" was in tow.

With no little difficulty, the boat was disentangled and shoved off to examine dangers. Fortunately no harm done; oars all safe, and no sign of leaking.

The steamer was already some way ahead, but sitting down to a spurt, Bow and Three, cheered on by Cox, soon caught her up, and made fast once more.

It was dark when they reached a lock three miles from Corbeil; and coming to anchor, the two crews adjourned to the engine-room of the steamer. The Frenchmen produced a large brown bowl filled with pork balls and garlic, and made our men heartily welcome. Three had a furtive hard-boiled egg; and the memory of the garlic
soon vanished in the deep red wine which they drank without any pride from an earthenware basin. A big smoke and long talk on deck—and then a mad merry night with the mosquitoes—Two sprinkling himself under

the stars with the "Terror," which only proved a more successful incantation for his weird enemies.

Another pleasant day in tow with the French yacht, and in the charming society of its friendly crew, landed the "Marie" at Melun, thirty-five miles from Paris, when Stroke met the boat, and resolved, hand or no hand, to row on the following day.
CHAPTER XXX.


Once more in the sweet-smelling country, fairly away from the big city, and with the old charm of the quiet river, which had been lost for seventy miles. Best of all, the crew again together, and in high glee at the prospect of pushing on.

Melun, a clean old-fashioned town, with hilly streets. Everything bright and sparkling after the black "Morgue" waters—dew glistening on the cool grass, where we had had dust from the hot streets.

Our inn, a capital specimen of the old French posting-house, with a gallery and wooden stairway round the courtyard.

We were just in time for the table d'hôte, where we met the maire, the docteur, and the usual old soldier, with the serviette round his neck. A real honest country dinner. Steaming bouillon with fresh white bread, plenty
of *bouilli*, and only such monster fowls as France can produce.

We had hoped to have entertained the French crew, but they pleaded hard work and the want of a long night's rest. We saw the little yacht when it was dark, and before we turned in, lying at anchor in a nest of rushes under the walls of the great fortress that rose from the river, the night-lantern rigged out in the bows, and four dusky forms round a gypsy kettle that swung over the crackling wood.

It was only the 11th of September, and yet the morning was almost cold enough for snow. With sincere regret we said good-bye to our friends, to whose courtesy and ready help the crew of the "Marie" were so much indebted; and a little after eleven (quite an early start) we shot once again on our upward journey. It was our last day on the Seine, and our intention was to take the canals du Loing and Orléans at St. Mamès, and after ninety quiet miles, drop into the Loire a little way above Orléans.

From Melun upwards the river is singularly interesting. It is the pastoral river in all its perfection, and, though on a grander scale, recalled parts of the Thames. For a long way we followed lofty woods of rich dark colour, that reminded us forcibly of those near Cliveden. Just out
of the town there is a splendid château opposite these woods, and with what must be a superb view. Two other châteaux, farther on, of deep red brick, shone out with effect from a mass of clustering foliage. And a little church of extreme beauty nestled on the heights among the trees. As we passed, the "Angelus" came faintly down the hill.

Five miles through a stiff stream took us to La Cave, and two more to Samois, where we eased up, Stroke taking headers in the lock to his heart's content, the others swimming under the spray of the weir.

Then we began to find what a coxswain we now possessed. Towels and linge du bain from the lock-house as if we were at the Hummum. And awaiting the appreciative appetite of four stalwart mortals glowing from vigorous plunges, and faint with hunger—the daintiest little luncheon arrayed temptingly on a grassy knoll.

No one ever knew how he did it, but for two or three francs he would surprise the crew with pâtés, cold chicken, partridge even, the tender Neufchâtel, and wine ad lib. In our early Seine, we regarded coffee and eggs as almost luxuries, and somehow we spent more. But then we were not a chef, nor a Prince in the mysteries of the cuisine.

Jean Bourrouou was!
You can see the "Marie" rising through the lock under the care of Stroke and Gyp. The former keeping his usual look-out ahead. Bow above (would you could hear him!) humming the good old French song:

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Mes chers garçons mes chers garçons, oh quel jour nous avons.
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"Ah! monsieur!" said the old lock-keeper, who sate
on the bank, delighted and touched by the music—"vous avez des larmes dans la voix! Chantez quelque chose de votre pays, monsieur—je vous en prie!" And Bow began our boat song.

THE OLD LOCK-KEEPER.
BOAT SONG.

Words by R. Reece.

Music by J. L. Molloy.

Row, row, onward we go,

Cleave the waves before us, Ride, ride, over the tide

With a glide, keeping the
BOAT SONG.

chorus: Steer, steer, tender and clear, shine the little stars o'er us,

Solo.

Row! row where yonder lady sleeps, float, float while the light-boat with the soprano, alto.

Float, float while the light-boat with the tenor.

Float.

Solecism: dances swing, haste! haste! thro' the weeds laced on the dancing waters swing, haste! haste! thro' the weeds laced on the floating, floating.
BOAT SONG.

oars that go a-ring-ing, Row, row on-ward we go, Still our love-song

1ST MELODY.

oars that go a-ring-ing, On-ward we go, on we go, on we

float, float, On-ward we go, on we go, on we

On-ward we go, on we go, on we

sing-ing, Flow! flow, ri-ver, be-low in thy cold blue deeps.

1ST MELODY.

go. Ri-ver flow, ri-ver, flow in thy cold blue deeps.

1ST MELODY.

Pass gent-ly un-der the bow-ers, Fra-grant-ly bud-la-den, Pluck ten-der

1ST MELODY.
BOAT SONG.

As a waking maiden, Bind garlands wet with the drops of dewy
1st Melody.

As a waking maiden, Bind garlands, bind
1st Melody.

As a waking maiden, Bind garlands, bind
1st Melody.

As a waking maiden, Bind garlands, bind
1st Melody.

showers, Row, row, onward we go, Cleave the waves before us,
1st Melody.

garlands. La la la la la la la la la la la la la
garlands. La la la la la la la la la la la la la
garlands. La la la la la la la la la la la la

garlands. La la la la la la la la la la la
Flow, flow, river in chorus, While our loved one sleeps.

Row, row, onward we go, Cleave the waves before us, Ride, ride over the tide with a glide, keeping the chorus, Steer, steer, tender and clear shine the little stars.

Row, row, onward we go, Cleave the waves before us, Ride, ride over the tide with a glide, keeping the chorus, Steer, steer, tender and clear shine the little stars.

Row, row, onward we go, Cleave the waves before us, Ride, ride over the tide with a glide, keeping the chorus, Steer, steer, tender and clear shine the little stars.

Row, row, onward we go, Cleave the waves before us, Ride, ride over the tide with a glide, keeping the chorus, Steer, steer, tender and clear shine the little stars.

Row, row, onward we go, Cleave the waves before us, Ride, ride over the tide with a glide, keeping the chorus, Steer, steer, tender and clear shine the little stars.
BOAT SONG.

o'er us, Row, row where yon-der la-dy sleeps, Float, float

while the light boat With the danc-ing wa-ters swing-ing, Haste, haste,

thro' the weeds laced On the ears that go a-ring-ing, Row, row,
onward we go, Still our love-song singing, Row, row, row where
onward we go, Still our love-song singing, Row, row, row where
onward we go, Still our love-song singing, Row, row, row where
onward we go, Still our love-song singing, Row, row, row where

yon-der lady sleeps.

yon-der lady sleeps.

yon-der lady sleeps.

yon-der lady sleeps.
But with luncheon, singing, and sketching, we lingered so long that it was almost evening when we got off. And then, outside the lock, we came to a spot which for beauty of an original type, surpassed anything we had yet seen on the Seine.

The village of Samois—very old, and of a soft gray colour, with just one wooden house at the water's edge, half hidden in twisting flowers. Facing this, an opening between two islands, through which the boat stole, leaving its little track through masses of white lilies.

A grotto of water-rocks, covered with moss and purple, in and among a cluster of silver willows. Under the drooping branches, leafy tunnels, with far in glimpses of the same delicate pink flower we had seen below Poissy. We thought of the fisherman at Lough Neagh, who saw in the depths the cities and round towers of other days; for close to the boat there was a startling lake picture of the gray village and the little house of flowers.

Away on the other bank, the water-terrace of a large park fringed with box-trees. Opposite, a temple buried in the foliage of the second island.

Below all, the glistening of the white weir, where the river stopped to sing before it went on its way.

"Now, Bow, tumble out, and produce your crayons. We must have this bit."
We deposited him in isolated beauty on the summit of one of the moss rocks; went to a little distance, anchored, and lay full length in delicious laziness, looking up at the faint clouds that looked like so many white blossoms in the sky.

We had lain there for near an hour, when we heard the tinkling of a bell! Looking up, we saw a ferry-boat coming out from the trees towards the village.

A Curé was on board, bareheaded, his hands clasped reverently on his breast. Two little acolytes in red and white, standing with lighted torches.

It was the Blessed Sacrament being carried to some one in danger of death.

Two women on their knees, their faces buried in their hands. The old ferryman who was rowing barely lifting his head.

The boy who had the bell, only a child, leant over the side of the boat, and played with his hand dreamily in the water. The rest were sad, with the stillness that comes at such times.

They passed between the islands, and through the willows, to the foot of the village. Then up the narrow street, and so lost in the winding of the hill.

When they had gone, the ferryman moored the boat
out in the stream, then took another, so that the one which had carried our Lord should that day be no more used.

With the sun going down, and setting the vine slopes aflame, we had our final pull.

With all the glory of the golden evening shining back from the lake water, and the river that had been so coy, putting forth all its beauty, now that we were leaving it. It was an evening all of us will long remember.

The silver fish leaping alongside stroke for stroke. Those few bars of Weber's "Invitation" coming clear and distinct over the water from the open windows of a château.

The carriage and pair that followed us for awhile on the bank, and the severe-looking coachman that seemed astonished as well as amused at the boat—sent along the last two miles at racing pace—leaving him behind. The workmen along the hills going home. The girls with their cows, dropping down stream in a barge.

St. Mamès a short way ahead. One more dozen; easy all; and the last stroke was pulled on the Seine.
CHAPTER XXXI.

FONTAINEBLEAU—THE FOREST—"VOUS N'AVEZ JAMAIS MONTÉ UN TROTTER COMME ÇA."

We were on the borders of the great forest of Fontainebleau.

The people in the carriage we had passed came up as we landed. They were residents in the town, and gave us the unwelcome intelligence that the canals du Loing and Orléans were no longer navigable, but under government repairs, and would not be reopened for six weeks. It was very unfortunate—accustomed even as we were becoming to disappointments—for we had looked forward to a pleasant pull of eighty or ninety miles to the Loire, after the comparative stiff work up current. There was nothing for it, but a waggon for the "Marie" and a trudge of sixty miles across country to Orléans. Leaving the boat for the night with some cottagers, we walked on to Fontainebleau, some of the crew accepting the courteous offer of a seat in the carriage.

If the charges had been less outrageous, there would
have been none of the large hotels we encountered so satisfactory as "l'Aigle Noir." It had a pretty cour, and the hall was literally a blaze of flowers and fruit. Peaches in pyramids, and so provokingly at every corner that it was an impossibility to resist them. It must have been the number the crew absorbed while asking about rooms (little foreseeing their shadow in the bill) that inspired Madame *au comptoir* and the *patron* with such sweet deference.

They themselves led the way to our rooms. Bow and Three through a rose garden to a pavilion suite that looked pretty under the trees. Two and Stroke to comfortable white-curtained rooms, facing the King-haunted château.

A remarkable feature in French towns, large and small, often in villages, are the baths, to which the people devote particular attention. Fontainebleau specially excelled, and we found the *bains* a model of comfort and almost elegance. Only the woman was horrified at our asking for quite cold water. Warm and tepid baths she comprehended as sanatory, but *l'eau froide*—"*Grand Dieu*—*quel caprice!*"

Coxswain appeared after dinner, with news that he had secured the only waggoner in the town, but that he would not be disengaged for two days. However, we were in cosy quarters, and there were some amusing people in the
hotel. Then there was the forest and the château—and some rumour of a stag hunt.

There was an extraordinary waiter, too, with a pale, sullen face, but with the movements of a magnetised marionette. He never walked or glided into the room as the rest of his species, but hopped in as if he was on wires, as if some one pulled the strings from above. You never knew when a plate was coming till it was deposited with a bang. His manner had an expression of distant haughtiness, which was in singular contrast with the convulsive comedy of his body.

Chartering an open carriage with an iron framework and dimity curtains in the event of possible rain, we went into the town to lay in a stock of luncheon, and were convinced that the good people of Fontainebleau were neither particularly hard-worked nor surfeited with excitement from the way they stared at and followed us. We had quite a crowd round the boulangerie where we stopped for bread, and were objects of much interest in the fruit market. But there was never the suspicion of rudeness or discourtesy. It was only the curiosity of a dull town—(it does not even possess a café-chantant)—and when we were in need of it, we ever found the truest politeness.

We left it to Three, who was deep in forests, to choose one of the many routes, each of which occupies more than
a day. We drove straight to the Gorges d’Apremont and the Croix de Franchard, at the foot of a Hermitage, now in ruins, but old as the days of Philip Augustus. It was a pity that a restaurant stood close by, with disenchancing labels of “Bass’s Pale Ale,” in the windows. But it was perhaps balanced by a picturesque old woman with a donkey-cart, selling “Lait chaud et froid.”

There were several restaurants, and our cocher’s notion of enjoying the scenery was to stop at every one of them, with alternate glimpses between.

It is difficult to be sensible of the immensity and grandeur of such a forest, till one has spent a long day in it—and even so, it would require a week to find out what it really is. There is something big in the fact of the copse being cut only every twenty-five years, and the haute futaie but once in every 120. Without a guide, it would be hopeless to find one’s way, for there are over 40,000 acres, and though roads and forest paths radiate in every direction, they so cross and intersect and wind through endless depths, that they bewilder almost more than would their non-existence.

Where the trees are large, they are gigantic. The oak “Jupiter” for instance, and another, pointed out as 1400 years old. I think the crew managed to embrace one with their united arms, or very nearly so. The glens are of strange wild beauty, and then suddenly you come upon a
valley of purple heath and dense underwood, with a long wilderness of rocks. Rocks of deep sandstone—called the grès de Fontainebleau—and beautiful in their picturesque ranges.

But again you discovered a lady under a grand oak, with a green-baize table, and "Souvenirs de la Forêt!"—and in a bewitching copse an old man with toys. There was nothing to find fault with, except that for the moment it broke in upon the one great charm of solitariness. We wondered all the same where these people could have come from, for it was a long way from Fontainebleau, and the little village of Barbizon on the outskirts is far off.

One man we met harmonised startlingly with the place. A blind beggar, with a long white beard—in one of the wildest of the forest depths—leaning on a staff, and led by a little girl. They asked for no alms—and the child's face was sweet and winning—but passed on, never looking back, and disappeared through the trees, hand clasped in hand.

We spread the luncheon in a lovely spot, up a stairway that wound through rocks and black firs, amid masses of tangled ferns, with glimpses of scarlet from scattered wild flowers. A thunderstorm was coming, and on the grass and in the foliage there was that vivid intensity of deepening colour that so often precedes it. Growls of awakening thunder rolled up the long ranges of sandstone, that looked like villages of rocks.
It was grand when it came, the yellow flashes round the oaks, peal after peal, and the soft crushing noise of the rain through the leaves. We crept for shelter under a low ledge of table rock carpeted with moss; but our intrusion was resented by a small army of reptiles and slimy things crawling through the crevices.

"I know a fellow," said Two, "who met a snake——." That was enough. We departed on the instant, lost our way, and stumbled on a brigand's cavern, where we took refuge. This would have been delightful, only there was a man who lighted a torch and told stories of the place for fifty centimes.

Then the storm was over, leaving a delicious freshness on the grass and the sweet smell of the forest everywhere. We had an amusing half-hour shouting through the wood for Cocher, and found him smoking over a faggot fire.

More rain as we drove back, and the dimity curtains were in requisition. A bright little dinner and the usual match at billiards. Bow side versus Stroke.

Next morning we made up our minds to follow la chasse.

We could find only one horse—a long, suffering, skinful of bones, and blind. He could stand, and that was all.

The proprietor was indignant with Bow for not caring about him.

"Vous n'avez jamais monté un trotter comme ça," he said, disdainfully.
We consoled ourselves with the dimity carriage as before. The meet was to be at "La Croix du Grand Veneur," in the heart of the forest. The "Grand Veneur" supposed to be the spectral Black Huntsman who appeared to Henri IV., on the spot where the obelisk now stands, the night before his assassination. Our reminiscences of the hunt were, on the whole, of a negative character. We heard dogs giving tongue, but saw no deer. Several carriages, and a long low cart with a placard—"Café des chasses à courre—Pale ale." Now and then the hounds, who seemed to go where they liked, and had it all their own way, lounged across a ride from one cover to another. One dog sate down in the middle of the road—thought a little—and trotted quietly home. Three others, looking out from a wood and watching him, refreshed themselves at a pool, and followed in the same way.

The huntsmen were, at all events, picturesque, and no other dress would have suited that grand old forest. The green velvet and gold, the tassels, the horn winding round the body, brought back a certain charm of old days, and made up in poetry for the occasional absence of real sport. We chatted for a long time with one huntsman, and he didn't seem in the least hurry; but said, when the conversation was over, "Well, I suppose I may as well go on again."

We gave it up for luncheon, explored more of the forest,
and came upon the little inn (*Ganne*), the central point for artists and tourists. There was a gallery of sketches worth looking at, and more interesting still, *croquis* on the walls, the doors, and shutters, quaint and grotesque fancies from hands that had come and gone. There was an excellent cottage-piano, folios of good music about, and a slender white kid glove, with many buttons, lying on the keys. I believe Two stole that glove as a trophy of the forest.

We saw more beautiful woodland scenery than even on our first visit, and began to feel how little were two days to take in the grandeur of the King forest.
CHAPTER XXXII.

OUR WALK TO ORLÉANS—MALESHERBES—LE PETIT MOUTON—PITHIVIERS—WE ARE ALMOST REFUSED ADMITTANCE—STROKE PLAYS A SIMPLE TUNE ON THE TEAPOT—WELCOME AT ONCE—THEATRE OPENED ONCE IN SIX YEARS—ORLÉANS.

The waggon was at the door of the hotel at an early hour, and we set off on foot in a steady dense rain. Our umbrellas were very soon lowered by a fierce head-wind that moaned dismally through the five miles of forest we passed. After that there was a long straight road for miles and miles, never once inclining to right or left, but taking us at every step into a country wild and little frequented by tourists. There was positively nothing to see on the way, and the rain came down in torrents, but we enjoyed it all the same. As an indication of the current of political feeling, we noticed chalked up in several places "Vive Napoléon IV." The "Marie" looked an enormous length on top of the cart, and made the few country people we met stare with open mouths.

We stopped, after fifteen miles, at Malesherbes, pulling
EN ROUTE TO ORLÉANS.
up by a very ancient stone cross in the Market Place. The sun came out, and with it the whole village to inspect the greatest novelty that had passed through since the Prussians. Had a capital lunch in the kitchen of the Hôtel de l’Écu, where Talbot fils the Coiffeur, and the landlord’s son, in blue blouses and sabots, fairly beat Stroke in two exciting games of billiards. Pushed on again through still more lonely country, crossed the Essone by a pretty stone bridge, and towards evening began to draw near Pithiviers.

"Le Petit Mouton" was the name of our horse. A brave, sturdy little animal, that, spite of his load, kept us at a brisk four miles an hour. It was well we were in fair condition, or the heavy roads, oftentimes stones for miles, would have made the continuous pace tell. He was a great pet with the driver, and had a little history. Taken by the Prussians from the village, and made to serve in the artillery during the war, was heard of at Sedan; after that almost forgotten. One night, passing by the borders of the Orléans forest, the driver heard a neigh, and found the little horse wounded, and left for dead in a ditch. He had him taken back to the village, tended his wounds, and Le Petit Mouton recovered.

"Donne-moi la main," the driver would sing out cheerily to him, going up a hill, and Mouton pricked up his ears and quite understood.
Pithiviers was our halting place for the night; a grey-stone town on a steep hill. It was dark when we drew rein at the door of the chief inn. We were all but refused admittance. Not expressly, but there seemed to be a decided disinclination to receive us. Our figures and costume after the long day’s drenching, were perhaps not imposing. They couldn’t make out in the gloom what was on top of the cart, and they seemed equally at a loss to make out who, or what, we were. We got as far as the kitchen, and began to talk about rooms. The landlady pretended not to hear, and none of the maids stirred a foot. Coxswain, her own countryman, tried his sweet persuasion, but she would not be melted. There was a glimmer of mistrust and suspicion in the way they looked at us. We were almost giving it up in despair, though the odour of a ragout stole upon us with mesmeric influence. We turned to leave, when—seeing a teapot on the kitchen table, Stroke advanced towards it, and seized it under a sudden inspiration.

They thought he was going to steal it. No!—he motioned them to be still.

Then putting the spout to his mouth, and with his right hand using the lid as a swell, he played a tune upon it. No harmony, no counterpoint, not even a fugue, but a simple tune. A wild plaintive melody that crept into
their hearts, and told the story of our long journey—our dangers by land and river.

The white-robed chef, who had been basting the poulet, stood with suspended ladle.

"Ma mère!" he murmured softly.

"Les jours de mon enfance," said the old landlady.

From that moment we were welcome. They lighted us to our rooms, did the thousand nameless little things that only affection can suggest in the way of comfort, and the chef prepared such a dinner——, but we will only mention one dish.

Reader, did you ever eat pâte d'alouettes? I fear you will have had but little chance, unless you have passed by Pithiviers. No foie gras ever yet approached it! And we never came across it again. Would at the time we had ——, but let it pass.

As a proof of our sudden distinction, a little gentleman, in Pithivian evening dress, waited on us during dinner, and announced himself as the chef d'orchestre of the Pithiviers theatre.

It was opened once only in six years. This evening was one of the occasions. There was a distinguished fiddler from a neighbouring village, and a drummer from Orléans. He had the honour of placing stalls at the disposition of ces Messieurs.

(He had been told of the teapot.)
We would have gone, but that we lingered in forgetful pipe-land till it was all over, and we were not sorry to turn in after our long day's tramp.

Wet again the next day, and windier than ever. At times the wild gusts almost lifted the boat from the waggon, and made it doubly hard work walking. But towards noon it cleared a little, as we reached Chilleurs-aux-bois, a homely village, skirting a wood. At the entrance a large stone cross, and over the inn door, "St. Maree, ora pro nobis."

Another inn we passed, an auberge rather, had the following inscription:

Quand vous passez devant ce lieu,
Recommandez-vous à Dieu.

You can see what a pleasant salon the interior of the waggon made: our own boat supplying the most picturesque of roofs, and the heavy folds of the tarpaulin doing as good duty as any tapestried walls. Such a cosy corner for luncheon, too, when we pulled up for the midday halt, and Le Petit Mouton had a short hour's rest.

In a lonely part of the road we passed a mud hovel, not much larger than a dog-kennel. A man from the inside beckoned to one of us, and asked if we were foreigners. We told him.
“Ah! je m’en doutais,” he replied. “Eh bien!—moi aussi, j’ai mon histoire.”

Asking for a little elucidation, there was no other answer but—

“Allez; moi aussi, j’ai mon histoire.”
As the day waned we could see for many miles the big towers of the cathedral—and just as the Angelus was ringing, made our entry through the narrow streets and gabled houses of the old city. "There it is!"—and stopping Le Petit Mouton, we turned down an avenue to have our first look at the Loire.
CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LOIRE.

FIRST LOOK AT THE LOIRE—"MARIE" SUFFERS FROM MOUTON'S ENTHUSIASM—VILLAGES ABOUT ORLEANS—THE SOLONAIS PEASANT—THE LOIRET.

The river we had been warned it would be madness to tempt in our little boat.

"Quel torrent révolutionnaire que cette Loire!" said Barrère, of this enormous stream, that divides France almost in two—whose changes of bed are so sudden and frequent—the terror of whose vast inundations is remembered with dread. In 1846 it flooded the country round Orléans for twenty-five miles, and rose in the streets of the city to sixteen feet. Ten years later, and in the month of June, it swept in an impetuous torrent over the land,—wrecked houses—destroyed the crops and tore up the soil for hundreds of square miles.

And yet it flows through the sunniest part of all France.

"Le pays de rire et de ne rien faire!"

A country of golden orchards and yellow wheatlands—
drooping with heavy vines, and so rich in the gifts of nature, that men have but to stretch out their hands and take them as they come.

Unlike the Seine, the Loire never turns or pauses on its way—never comes back to look again—but with resistless force, and between ever-widening banks that seem to recede from it in awe, hurls grandly on its straight course to the ocean.

Even here it was like the beginning of a wilderness, with its many islands and tracts of sand—and the water had a cold, pitiless look.

Mouton, pleased with the way he had performed his journey, and throwing up his proud head, had broken a large hole in the fore covering of the boat. This detained us two days at Orléans, and we were fortunate in finding a man who—unlike the Paris boat-builders—really understood his business, and put her in perfect repair. If we had been dependent on Orléans alone, we should have found it dull work. It has almost a deserted look, no noise or movement in the streets, and in the outlying parts the grass grows between the pavement. There is a faint animation and pretence of life in the Place Martroi, the centre of the town. But it only occurs from two omnibuses and a few voitures de remise, that don't seem to have much to do. A statue of Jeanne d'Arc stands in the centre, but most unworthy of the subject. That by the Princess
Marie d'Orléans, in front of the Mairie, is far beyond it in conception and graceful design.

The impressions left by the cathedral are its great size and the splendour of its façade.

An old and curious church to visit is that of St. Euverte, reported to have been founded by a Roman idolater, converted by St. Martin of Tours.

The Mairie is handsome, and the Musée has a fine gallery of paintings. Then there are two or three houses worth looking at—those of Agnès Sorel, of Diane de Poitiers, and Jeanne d'Arc. But it doesn't do after one has seen Rouen, or even the old houses of Caudebec. In fact, there is very little to be seen in all Orléans, and that little does not occupy long.

All that is picturesque and quaint you must look for in the environs, and there it is to be found. The old châteaux of Montpipeau, Chenaille, the woods of Ingre, the orangery of Châteauneuf, Cléry, the vineyards of St. Denis-en-Val, and hard by the ruins of two ancient castles.

In a little but most interesting work by M. Vergnaud-Romagnesi, called Orléans et ses Environs, he speaks of two little villages, Val and Sologne, near Orléans, separated only by a few fields. The inhabitants of the latter are called Solognots, an unfortunate, sorry race. From the age of three years they contract a disease of the stomach called carreau, which never leaves them while they stay at home,
but is cured the moment they quit the village. Their hair becomes exceedingly dark, and their complexion leaden. Very large and disfiguring teeth, that fall out in premature old age. A shrill voice, and small, almost deformed, figures. Live in wooden huts—are superstitious—and preserve strange old customs.

In the *France Pittoresque*, a Solonais peasant on his marriage is described as taking good care not to allow his wife to put on the nuptial ring, but does so himself, and presses it well down to the third joint, in the belief that if he acted otherwise, madame, and not he, would be master.

The Bride and Bridegroom hold lighted tapers during the ceremony, and it is believed that the one whose taper goes out first will be the first to die.

Another merry pastime is to prick them in the back during the marriage till even blood flows—"*on a l'usage de piquer par derrière, et jusqu'au sang, le marié et la mariée,*" in order to find out which of them will be the more jealous.

In Orléans itself, as well as the country round, there still exist the *assemblées*, under the various names of *pardons, corps saints, valteries* and *kermesses*.

One of them, and the most ancient, has died out—the *pardon des Carmes*, which used to be held in the *Rue des Carmes*, and which princes honoured with their presence.
Nothing of it now remains but the old quatrain, which the peasants of Loiret never forgot—

"Pour vivre dans l'envie
Et qu'on ait bien son lot,
Il faut que la Marie
Prene ici son Pierrot."

Marie being "toute jeune fille à marier, and Pierrot, le garçon qui doit la conduire à toutes les assemblées suivantes."

Had the "Marie" been ready we should have explored in her the beautiful little river Loiret, which, small as it is, gives its name to the department. As we could not afford to throw away a day, we took one of the idle diligences of the Place Martroi, as far as the Pont d'Olivet, then by boat up stream to the source. Its extreme length is only seven and a half miles, but there is perhaps no more picturesque spot in France. From beginning to end it is beautiful, and more like a garden through which a pretty stream winds. The grass on the banks is that of a well preserved lawn, and the attraction of the place is attested by the number of villas and summer cottages that follow the river nearly its entire course. The houses are of pretty design, and peep out like so many nests from the heavy clustering foliage. One or two are large and noble châteaux, with stone terraces; but the majority are wooden maisonnettes, built over boat houses. There are cottages, too, of the peasants, and charming river-side restaurants.
and inns with balconies over the water—covered with great rose bushes, and lime blossoms, and clematis twisting down to the deep cool water. Vines seemed to grow in profusion; and the river had a way of turning so as to never let you see where it was going, but dived into big trees beckoning you to follow it. No loneliness on the Loiret—it hadn’t room for it—only in little bits where it wandered off from its course up a narrow inlet through ferns and white willows, and wild birds had it all to themselves. There were people about the châteaux and at the lattice windows, and boats like our own going up to the Source. Blanchisseuses on the shingle singing and laughing to the accompaniment of the wooden battoir. It might have been a great school of blanchisserie, for we saw little children hard at work with a most business-like air.

The Source was a lovely spot, at the foot of the Château de la Source, with soft green grass encircling a small basin, in the centre of which the spring boiled up, forming at the outset a navigable river. It was surrounded by lofty trees and completely shaded from the sun, and the water was clear and transparent as glass. It is supposed that the Loiret corresponds by subterraneous canals with the Loire, for the floods occur almost contemporaneously in both.

The spring is very cold, but never known to freeze, and feeds the great mills at Saint-Mesmin lower down the river. This little village is by far the most picturesque spot on
the Loiret, and there are very interesting remains of an old abbey, founded by Clovis. The gardens still exist, and you see the wine pressers at work in what was part of the ancient church.

The Château de la Source was not particularly interesting in itself, but had beautiful gardens and long shady avenues. We were surprised to hear the servants speak English, and were told it was the property of an English gentleman, who had lately taken it.

But somehow lionizing wasn't amusing without the "Marie," and going over show places with the everlasting guide-book (unless it happened to be a French one) became terribly monotonous. The old woman at the lodge-gate bid us "Boorn jouare, messieurs," and we turned to walk back to Orléans. Passed many road-side crosses, with little poor boxes attached, always erected in pretty places; and I noticed one or two peasants dropping their mite in as they went by. One had an inscription—

Stupete gentes
Crux
Omnia Vincit.
Reis Dona Veniam.

Another:

Notre Dame de Bon Secours,
Priez pour les passants et voyageurs charitables.
CHAPTER XXXIV.

OUR FIRST PULL ON THE LOIRE—RACE WITH THE GIG—THE BILL—
GRANDEUR OF THE RIVER—WILDERNESS OF SAND—DESOULATION—
OUR FIRST SANDBANK—"IS IT A QUICKSAND?"—MEUNG—MADAME
DE POMPADOUR AND THE BRIDGE—BEAUGENCY.

The "Marie" had recovered the effect of Mouton's enthusiasm, and ready for any amount of tiny hurricanes, was being hoisted on the little charrette, to carry her through the streets. There was rather more than the usual crowd, and every disposition to be of assistance. But they all spoke of the river with a certain kind of awe,—no doubt with the recollection of so many deaths in the quicksands. At one town alone, the average number of swimmers who disappeared yearly was over eighteen.

The tide was swinging by with a rush as we launched our little ship, and waving our adieux to the friendly crowd on the bank, and at the windows, we dipped oars for the first time (Wednesday, September 17th) in the waters of the Loire.

The swift athletes of Orléans tried to keep up alongside, but the current was too strong, and the "Marie" walked
away from them. Two or three made a plucky stern chase for some time, but were fairly beaten and had to give in.

As if to make one effort for the honour of the city, an old gig came tearing along at a furious rate, two men in it gesticulating wildly. The crowd were delighted and cheered. There was going to be a novel race!

For the fun of the thing, Stroke gave the word, and the boat began to walk. Inch by inch, we drew from them, and it was pitiable to see the despair of the driver and his companion. They threw up their arms, made the most extraordinary signs to us, called on the old horse, and warmed him up with the _fouet_. We were going right away, when the man who was not driving, held up frantically a piece of white paper.

It flashed upon us in an instant! It was no race at all, but only the boat-builder, and we had forgotten to pay his bill.

It was just as well we had not been beaten, but were enabled to pull up with good grace, or the local papers might have imputed very different motives to our vigorous exertions.

Set off once more with a dead head-wind, and as a matter of course a heavy fall of rain. But this had become a second nature, and we should have been almost lonely without our old friend. What a time we were
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getting rid of those Cathedral towers! Now and then an elevation of the bank, a bend of the river, or dark wood hid them, we fancied, no more to appear. But there they were round every corner, standing out big and bold against the dark sky, when the rest of the city was lost to view.

It is difficult to conceive anything more desolate than this part of the Loire. No interest from the surrounding country, which had a dreary look and was almost monotonous. A few bleak hills were all we saw for five miles, except sand and water. Then came two or three houses at Saint-Ay, where the holy recluse of that name built himself a hermitage to be far away from the world. He couldn't have chosen better on the banks of the Nile. Then on again through the vast waste of sand, a desert that seemed never ending.

"I don't believe there's a sandbank in the place!" said Bow.

"Nor I either," said Two. "It is all very well for barges, but a boat that draws no more water than a swallow——"

We were on it! Flying over a bed of pebbles and stones (Gyp was out like a shot), getting shallower and shallower and grating under the boat. We tried to back water and stop her with the gaffs. They would have been quite as effectual if we had been going down Niagara.
Nothing could stem that current, and we settled down firmly but softly into our first bed of sand.

Of course we had to get out, but first we consulted.

"Suppose it's one of the quicksands?" said Bow—"case of disappearing!"

"A fellow put me up to a good thing," said Two; "lie flat on your back, and the resistance you know"——

"But you can't lie there all day!"

"No! of course not; shout for a fellow to come and take you off."

We tried it, one foot at a time, and found we didn't sink above the ankles, and with less difficulty than we had in recovering Gyp, who was being whirled round and round in an eddy with a stone in his mouth, got the boat off.

Twelve miles from Orléans, eased up for the first time at Meung. A small town built on three rather pretty rivers, *Les Mauves*, and possessing a handsome suspension bridge. Worth stopping to see the church of St. Liphard, buried in walls, no doubt serving as a fortress in the old wars. One of the many places on the river from which the English were driven by *La Pucelle*.

An incident connected with the place is worth quoting from Amédée Achard. A beautiful woman—a marquise, and almost a queen—did, though unconsciously, good service to the little town. Madame de Pompadour lived at
Ménars-le-château, and one day Hupeau the architect called upon her in great distress. He had just completed the pont d'Orléans; his enemies were spreading such unfavourable reports as to its solidity, that no one would venture upon it. Conceiving no more simple way to silence them, Hupeau proposed that the marquise should cross the bridge in her carriage and six horses. Madame de Pompadour —qui était bonne fille au fond—consented. The ordeal was successful, and the slanderers ought to have been for evermore silenced. But three days afterwards the following epigram appeared in all the cafés and in the streets of the town:

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

The favourite read the epigram, and that she might never again be obliged to cross the bridge, caused the direction of the road to be changed.

Meung reaped all the benefit of the poetry.

Leaving the town, the river resumed its wild black aspect, and the navigation of the sand islands became intricate. We had no means of ascertaining the channel, and there was no one to ask. Once and once only we sighted a barge, which seemed to have no occupation, but was embedded in sand. Two men on board.
Said one, "Je ne suis pas du pays, moi!"
And the other, "Il me semble que vous ferez bien de suivre toujours la Loire!"

The rain was pouring down, and they didn't look like wags caught in a storm, but answered in simple good faith. Only, what on earth were strangers doing in such a meaningless wilderness!

The wind came up in fierce gusts, and at times almost drove the boat back, but when it dropped we felt what a magnificent tide was under us. We also found the effect of the precaution in covering in the "Marie," for seas that before would have been fatal, broke harmlessly over her.

Beyond the wild geese, which we scared as we passed, we saw no object of interest, save a man struggling under an umbrella, half a mile off on the left bank. He looked only a dot, but it was a sign that the land was inhabited.

As evening came up, there was a change in the weather, and the sun very nearly broke out.

We had only one more affair with a sandbank, and then, passing the villages of Messas and Villeneuve, saw the pointed roofs and bell-towers of Beaugency but a few miles distant. We were in deep water and swift, and the current swung us down upon the old bridge almost before we knew it.

Moored alongside a barge, and never saw such utter
astonishment as on the faces of the people who ran down to see us land. They put their hands on the boat as on some strange wild thing, and seemed much pleased with her. Were very kind, and carried our luggage through the town; one small boy piteously imploring that we would let him carry an oar. "Mais je vous en prie, Messieurs!" and staggered under it with great pride up the old street.

People came out from their shops to chat with us, and we were stopped several times en route. They were by far the friendliest people we had seen, and were exceedingly courteous in their manner.

A fat old bourgeois asked Three, if in their own country English people were kind and polite to foreigners, or whether they laughed at their accent? We left Three to answer, and hoped he got through it satisfactorily.

Our arrival was quite a little excitement for the old town. One of the crew in one street, another in the next, and so on, each the centre of a group of men and women, who were prepared to ask questions, and go on chatting all night. The small boy with the oar collected us at last, and took us to the hotel. The oar was quite as much as he could carry, and was very unmanageable. He nearly sent it through several windows, and getting it between the Gendarme’s legs, all but upset that solemn functionary.

Hotel homely and comfortable as one could wish, and a
very pretty landlady, who popped down ducks and partridges the moment we entered.

Came across some excellent wine, called Beaugency, which is reputed to be one of the best of the Orléanois, and it certainly did not belie its reputation.
CHAPTER XXXV.

BEAUGENCY—FRIENDLY PEOPLE—CURIOUS OLD PLACE—THE CRYPT—THE CHILD'S FUNERAL—WE START AGAIN—OUR LUNCHEON.

Seen from the opposite bank, Beaugency is an interesting old town. A grand bridge of twenty-six arches, one of them called *la marinière*, being constructed in suspension. A massive square tower, *la tour de César*, supported by enormous buttresses, rises loftily above all the other buildings of the town. It is all that remains of the old castle, whose fortifications extended as far as the bridge. Close to it the church of St. Etienne, one of the most ancient in France. The *tour Saint-Firmin*, flanked with heavy buttresses, is the last remnant of a church wrecked in the revolution, but it still has the big bells of the parish and an old clock. The Hôtel de Ville is a charming souvenir of the Renaissance. All through it there is a series of bas-reliefs, representing the arms of Dunois, those of the family de Longueville, and the allegorical salamander of François I. There is some wonderful tapestry and a profusion of *fleurs de lis*, expressing the motto of Beaugency—*Manibus date lilia plenis*. 

BEAUGENCY.
The whole town is a pleasant grouping of the narrow sombre streets of the middle ages, with old and interesting houses. One in the rue Puits-de-l'Ange, at present a pastrycook's, belonging formerly to the Knights Templars. Another, called the Auberge de la Croix d'Or, was the house of Henri IV.

Most curious of all is a large crypt, or subterranean cavern, underneath a house in the Place Martroy. It is supported by arches and pillars, and all in the town will tell you that it was the place where mass was celebrated at a time when the early Christians were under persecution.

But we liked the people best of all—primitive, and beaming with good-nature. While Bow was doing his matutinal sketch, we had long talks with them on the petit mail, a long shady promenade, leading to the terrace, which borders the river. We were quite a family party, and began to know them by their names.

As we went down to the boat, we met a child's funeral. Somehow there was no sadness about it, there was so much that was pretty. The coffin was covered with lilies. Children in white went before, scattering flowers. It made one think of Herrick:

"Here she lies a little bud,
Lately made of flesh and blood,
Who as soon fell fast asleep
As her little eyes did peep.
Give her flowers, but not stir
The earth that lightly covers her."
The children’s voices followed us, as the “Marie” went swiftly down the current.

There is little to record in our pull to Blois. The Loire widening and still more lonely till we came to Mer on the right bank, a place of some 5000 inhabitants. Chambord was not very far, but we preferred the river. Had we been certain of seeing the two lines that Charles V. is said to have scratched with a diamond on the window—

"Souvent femme varie,
Mal habil qui s’y fie,"

we might have trotted across country to the old castle, but then it would have consumed a whole day, and our days were not so many now that we could spare even half.

By degrees, the river, without losing grandeur, had a softer expression and began to lose its former sense of desolation. The banks were more wooded, and grass grew down to the water’s edge.

We lunched in a very pretty spot. An island of poplars and silver sand, with colouring of dark rock. The spire of a church, and part of a little hamlet stole out opposite from a wood. The first blanchisseuses we had seen for some time were at work on the beach. It was a delicious afternoon, and nothing to break the stillness of the landscape but the black sails of a wooden mill that was near, and looked so big against the sky, and the laughter of the girls on the far shore. And we had
still one more box of the \textit{pâte d'alouettes} which careful Coxswain had carried off from Pithiviers, and if a crew can't be happy in such scenery and with that,—they ought to stay at home. I think our luncheons henceforward formed the chief feature of the day's pull—that and sketching and the reflective pipe. Never at a loss for pretty spots, for we exercised great discrimination in the selection, and had a critical eye for soft sward and natural arm-chairs. And then it became warm, brilliant weather, and the novelty of lying full length on dry grass and looking up at an unclouded sky was one of those luxuries more easily conceived than described.

Five or six miles on we passed the magnificent Château de Menars, originally belonging to Madame de Pompadour, and which it is said she herself partly designed, and furnished with the extravagant but exquisite taste of the period. It is a noble building, with large gardens descending in terraces to the water. Like everything else it suffered in the Revolution, and frequently changed owners. It is now the property of the Prince de Chimay, who established in it the \textit{école professionnelle du centre}. A band concealed somewhere in the trees was playing as we went by.

Then, far ahead in a haze of sunset, rose up the indistinct outline of Blois.

It was at such times we realized how grand was the
Loire—the river of ancient cities. Beautiful as the Seine was—in many respects far more so than the Loire—it fell far short of the latter in expanse. Here was something of the breadth and distance of the sea. I feel the difficulty, the impossibility even, of describing the effect it produced on us.

To come out of the solitariness of the river, let the boat drift with the tide, and turn round to watch the gradual unfolding of these cities, was in its way akin to the feeling of hearing for the first time one of the great symphonies of Beethoven. And there is nothing fanciful in this comparison. It is the simple expression of the thought which occurred at the time. Many will well understand how things, apparently opposite, and without any material connection, will, under certain influences, recall and suggest one another. Weber, from only seeing the tables, chairs, and benches of a café, piled up to the ceiling, composed one of his grandest triumphant marches. On days when the rain fell thick and heavy, he wrote his most joyous music, on sunny days the saddest.

I remember one of us saying that evening, as we looked at Blois, that it was like a peal of old bells, when they clang all together.

Most of our readers will probably have seen all these towns and many parts of the Loire. But it will have been by diligence or rail—shooting suddenly from a tunnel into
BLOIS.
the heart of the city, and with passing glimpses of the river:—for no steamers can ascend above Tours—and Gien, Orléans, Beaugency, Blois, and Amboise are accessible by land only. In no way but the way we travelled is it possible to see what these places really are, and how they are inseparable from the river.

But for the risk of wearying, we could dwell for pages on this one great charm of our wanderings. The happy independence of our little boat—the first on these waters, where none but fishermen had yet passed. Dropping down to these old cities, seeing the towers, churches, and castles open out from so many points of view, and with ever-changing aspect; lying perhaps for an hour in one spot in the lazy delight of only looking. Leaving them again, and seeing them die in the vague blue of the distance, as we went once more into the loneliness of the river.

"Well, I suppose we'd better pull on, and go steadily in; the critical eyes of Blois seem to be on that bridge!"

But it was not a triumphant entry. Another unseen sandbank nearly shot us out of the boat, and might have sent us under various arches with less dignity than we would have wished. It gave us time, however, to look at the old bridge, which was extremely picturesque, with
a large cross over the centre arch. Scrambled off—very nearly stumbled into a deep hole—and brought the "Marie" up to comfortable moorings, under the lofty walls of the quay.
CHAPTER XXXVI.

BLOIS—THE CASTLE—A BRIGHT TOWN—THEATRE—WE STICK IN THE MUD AGAIN—THE DYKE OR LEVÉE—SANDBANKS—OUR SABOTS—WHAT GYP DID WITH THEM—CHAUMONT—AMBOISE.

"L'histoire de la ville, c'est l'histoire du château." All the interest, as well as the history of Blois comes from its Castle. The very features of the town are but its reflection. Built on the side of a hill, there is no site on the Loire so striking or beautiful. With the exception of the Cathedral, it ascends royally above every other building. The old streets hurry up from the river, to meet at its foot, and as if they were impatient at not being quick enough, small and great stairways of stone clamber up from one to another in unexpected short-cuts. No castle in the long history of France has been the scene of more momentous events. Its origin is the delight of antiquarians, and you have reminiscences of Romans and Gauls to your heart's content.

Froissart wrote his Chronicles there in the 14th century, and the origin of the great library is described as being
two Bibles, a missal, a book called *le Gouvernement des Rois*, and the Voyages of Marco Polo, the royal present of Charles V. In April, 1429, Jeanne d’Arc, not yet the maid of Orleans, made her solemn entry into the town, and, clothed all but the head in white armour, and mounted on her great black horse, left it at the head of 6,000 men. And in a hundred years hence it will doubtless be recorded how in September, 1873, a strange boat, with iron arms and of incredible swiftness, stuck in the mud under the shadow of the still existing Castle.

It’s worth going up to the Castle, if only for the view. It’s not often that slates and house-tops enchain your attention, but you can look down for a long time on the brown roofs of Blois, mingling with the green trees. The streets are delightfully irregular, and stop suddenly, looking for an outlet. All but the main street, which having been a long country road, winding through a forest on the opposite bank of the river, crosses the old bridge, and goes straight through the town to the foot of a steep flight of stone steps—121 in number—above which you find another flight, leading to the upper town. This great stairway is bordered with trees, and has parterres of flowers all the way up, with wooden seats, and green old-fashioned lamps, and groups of children on every landing.

All the other towns on the Loire are still and solemn. I except Nantes, which is a port. There is about them an
air of stately pre-occupation, as if they had sate down on
the shores of the great river to think over their long dead
past, and repose in its memory; and certainly there is
nothing in the noiseless streets or silent houses to disturb
their meditation.

But Blois has a naïveté and brightness, with almost a
dash of fashion, which sits daintily on the city, and creeps
up to the very walls of the old château. Not any farther,
out of respect for the royal ghosts.

There are plenty of old houses to look at, crushed into
beautiful shapes with the weight of age. An old cobbler
has, I think, the prettiest; and there is one in the Rue
des Violette, where they sell flowers, and where Two
chatted such a long time through the lattice window,
which will make you stand a long time in front of it.
Two or three again near the Degrès du Château, and the
Place and Fontaine Louis XII., and down the old rue
St. Labin.

Our hotel was at the foot of the bridge and in the street
of stairways. The landlord a bright, merry host, who
invited us to his sanctum, a pretty room filled with curi-
osities and stuffed birds and animals. His love for the
latter very nearly equalled that of Jimmy Shaw. Mr.
Shaw, hearing in the midst of a festive gathering of the
death of an old Squire who had been his great friend, rose
with tears in his eyes, and said: "Ladies and gentlemen,
I rise to propose the 'ealth of a party which is gone from us;" and, dilating for a long time upon his noble qualities, wound up: "He wos a Squire he wos, and the only Squire I ever knowed as wos worthy of being stuffed."

We went to the theatre, and there was an opera of Offenbach, "Le Violineux," remarkably well played. But the performers, with the exception of the jeune première, were all very old. The tenor, who was the youngest, must have been 60. As for the orchestra, they looked as if they had been there from the time of the Gauls. The conductor, a cheery centenarian, played during the first act, and until he was relieved, a piano with his left hand, alternating this performance with the flute in tender movements, and conducted with his right. The house was very full, too, and we were fortunate in securing a box.

It was so sunny and warm that the Blésois and Blésoises, all but the exclusive phantoms of the château, crowded the bridge and the quays next day to inspect the boat, and see us go away. Fifty different people supplied us with fifty different theories for the future navigation of the river, which, owing to increased sandbanks, was becoming very intricate. At the very beginning we had to pull back through the bridge some hundred yards, make for the middle of the stream, shoot the centre arch, and then merrily away. The first part we accomplished satisfactorily,
and we came flying underneath the great Cross to the
evident delight of the people; but, alas, as we entered
Blois so we left it, and a few yards below the bridge there
was another record for the future annals of the Castle.
We had to carry the boat for five minutes over the sand,
and wait till it was Gyp's pleasure to return from a long
excursion, before we finally got away.

How grand the old city looked, surrounded with its
three forests, as we swiftly left it. There was a regiment
of soldiers, too, crossing the bridge, and flashing under
the sun, and the music of the band came leaping off the
stone piers, and dancing upon the water after the boat.
And long after the houses and spires had melted in the
distance, the great Castle still towered, till it grew a speck
against the blue sky.

The railroad coming down from the vineyards of Graces
follows the course of the river to Amboise and Tours.
Beneath it commences the colossal levée or dyke of the
Loire, which goes back to the time of Louis le Débonnaire,
and which in the reign of Philippe of Valois assumed its
present form. It is of great height and massive breadth,
and faced with masonry of stone called perré. Begun
under the Carlovingian kings, and strengthened by suc-
cessive French monarchs, it is at once a rampart against
the inundations of the Loire and a high road for carriages.
Great as it is, the swollen masses of water have burst
through it, even during late years. It runs along the bank for one hundred miles, and terminates at the mouth of the Mayenne, five or six miles below Angers.

We found the warm weather and the sun all the more delightful that we had so little of them during the cruise, and it was an inducement to bathe more than once in the day, irrespective of the time we spent in the water, getting the boat off sandbanks.

A little below Blois we passed Chouzy, where stood formerly the Abbaye de la Guide, founded for noble ladies by Jean de Châtillon. It was in this abbey that the Counts of Blois of the family of Châtillon were buried.

We began to find the sandbanks were not all sand, but gracefully varied with many-pointed flints, which were trying to the feet. Consequently we invested in sabots, which we were not aware required a peculiar way of walking and of lifting the feet from the ground; otherwise they were not unapt to give you unexpected headers in the water. We somehow found that they disappeared rather quickly, and couldn't make out the cause till, during luncheon, we watched Gyp walking off to the river with one in his mouth, setting it afloat, and giving it a long start down stream; plunging in after it with a wag of delight, and trying to catch it up, and, if he was unable to do so, coming back for another to play with. He had a notion that shoes were an improvement on stones, and then
STUCK ON A SANDBANK.
he was not forced to dive for them, but lay in wait till we had thrown them off.

Between Chouzy and Chaumont there existed long ago the famous château of Bury, which, it is said, almost rivalled Chambord. There is a legend, still told by the peasants, of a ghostly hunt every night, led by Thibaut le Tricheur, and crossing the river where we passed.

Then came Chaumont, the noblest of all the châteaux on the Loire, rising from a forest of trees, with a little brown hamlet nestling at its foot in their shadow.

We stopped before it nearly two hours—Bow, Two, and Three sketching it from every point—Stroke and Gyp swimming across to pick up legends in the cottages.

It was founded originally by Gueldin, a Dane, who had a pet name—le Diable de Saumur. Belonged to the Counts of Blois, the family of Amboise and Diane de Poitiers, who was forced to change Chenonceaux for it by Catherine de Medicis. The great Cardinal Amboise was born in it; it was a pottery once, for the terres de Chaumont; the residence of Madame Stael in her exile, and now belongs to an Irish gentleman—le Vicomte Walsh. Some years ago, a beautiful statue of Diane de Poitiers, leaning on a rock, was found not far from the castle, in the bed of the Loire.

We were passing here from Orléans into beautiful Touraine, and Chaumont was a brilliant introduction to it. We were five miles from Amboise.
"What does Murray say of it?" asked Boav, finishing his sketch.

"This old and languid town of 4,188 inhab——"

"Pretty!—and the French book?"

"— puis sur les deux rives du fleuve dont les cours embrassent une île, apparaît une de ces villes comme les aiment les poètes, mêlées d'arbres et de tourelles, et tout en haut, avec ses fortes murailles et ses donjons noirs, se dresse l'imposant et pittoresque château d'Amboise!"

"Comme les aiment les poètes!" Murray evidently mixed his notes, and thought he was writing up one of the Assize towns on the Home circuit," said Two, when we came to it and easied to look round.

It was everything the latter description had represented, and even the word painting of the French author barely expressed what we felt.

It was a strange contrast to Blois in its absolute stillness.

We dropped under the very walls of the castle without seeing a soul. There was no sound but the noise of the water rushing through the arches of the broken bridge. A new bridge was in construction, but the scaffolding round the unfinished buttresses was untenanted—a wheelbarrow was left half way across a plank, and the works were deserted.

It might have been the palace of the Sleeping Beauty,
but was only one of the retrospective cities that had no concern with the present.

Then two boys, and finally a man appeared on the quay, and were very civil in helping us to moorings, but expressed not the faintest surprise at our appearance. They didn’t even stop to look at the boat, but politely conducted us to the hotel, and with much gentleness declined to accept any remuneration.

It was a delightful old place, with a long terrace road buried in trees, lying under an embankment which for a little way shut out the town from the river.

There were orchards among the houses, and the little garden where the baths stood, blossomed over with grapes. We were able to certify that they were of a most excellent description.

All the Loire hotels are comfortable and good, and Amboise was no exception, but I shall never forget the astonishment of the few people at the table d’hôte in presence of the appetite of the crew.

"C’est fort curieux," whispered a lady to her husband; but then she was absorbed in admiration of Two, whose feats were worthy of the légion d’honneur.
AMBOISE, the Ambacia of the Romans, was another of the cradles of the French monarchy. The river Amasse gives to it its name, and the island Saint-Jean, close to the bridge, was the scene of the interview between Alaric and Clovis. From that time downwards, the town, like Blois, has through its fortress been intimately associated with memorable events in the history of France.

The château, flanked by round towers, is built on an enormous and almost perpendicular rock. It would look inaccessible but for two monster towers ascending from the very base, and rising to a level with the castle. In one of them there is a winding road of such gentle slope that you might easily drive a four-in-hand to the very summit. And then you would see one of the most exquisite little chapels in all France—the Chapel of St. Hubert, whose miraculous meeting with the stag bearing a cross be-
tween its horns is beautifully sculptured above the rich doorway.

The view from the towers is of immense extent. You can see the spires of the Cathedral of Tours, and follow the course of the river, with its sombre forests in the horizon.

And more interesting than all, perhaps, are the *greniers de César*, the subterranean caverns. You enter from a garden in the cliff through a long excavation in the rock, and find yourself in two suites that had formerly four storeys each. Parts of the floors and broken vaulting still remain. The Roman origin is revealed from the cement that covers the walls. Going on you come to a round vaulted chamber embedded in masonry, and a stone staircase of something like 120 steps cut in the rock, descending to the river. There are other vaulted rooms, supposed to have been used by the Romans as storehouses for corn.

The slopes leading to the terraces, on a level with the hill, are bright with gardens. These were the favourite spot of Leonardo da Vinci, who spent the last few years of his life in the Château Cloux-Luci on the outskirts of the town. It was at Amboise that Abd-el-Kader was imprisoned, till his release by the Emperor, after previous confinement at Toulon and Pau.

Coming down we met the people who had admired our
appreciation of dinner, starting for Chenonceaux, the bijou château of Diane de Poitiers, which Catherine de Medicis so coveted and finally obtained. It might have been pleasant to have gone with them, through the forest of Loches and along the banks of the Cher, but the Loire and the "Marie" were still pleasanter, and we rambled before starting through the churches and among the ancient houses on the quiet river road. From a picture
we saw of Chenonceaux, it must be a lovely place, the château rising from the Cher itself, and two drawbridges, one from the bank, the other from the castle, meeting half way at an ivy turret.

Amboise did not often witness such a gathering as came down to see us leave. There must have been very nearly a dozen people, and there was a little breeze of excitement, to watch the boat shoot the broken bridge. At first it looked almost impassable, unless we didn’t mind going through in pieces, for the arches were blocked up with fallen masonry, and sunken rocks and big stones that had been swept down in the floods. There was one opening, and one only, a narrow streak of water that dropped suddenly a foot from its level, half way under the bridge. It was a water-fence, and Coxswain putting the boat straight, she galloped at it of her own accord. Half her length must have been in the air as she went over, but we landed comfortably, and spun away cheerily with a swinging tide.

Not very far however, for the best view of Amboise was discovered half a mile down stream; and so there followed a bright afternoon on a soft sunny bank—crayons, bathing, and luncheon, till it wanted but two hours of table d’hôte, and sixteen miles to Tours. No great distance with such a current, and more work was done in the boat in one cool hour of the evening than four in the heat of midday—
or at all events we said there was whenever we wanted an excuse for an hour or two of delightful idleness. We made up for it however when we fairly started, and bar the irrepressible sandbank, did the remainder of the journey without an easy. We stuck opposite Vouvray, whose wine, a pleasant but heady champagne, we made acquaintance with later on, and found it worthy of the reputation it bears, of being one of the best in Touraine.

Before Tours, we passed one of those curious villages that belong eminently to the Loire.

A village carved out in the side of a cliff.

The dwellings were nothing more or less than simple excavations in the rock, and, for the first time of seeing it, had an extraordinary effect. One or two were faced with masonry, but the walls were in most instances partitions of the rock itself. This one, the village of Roche Corbon, was very picturesque, both from its position on the side of a promontory and from the vines and creeping plants that festooned the cottages. On the very verge of the cliff, high above the village, stood a lofty beacon-tower, called the Lanterne de la Roche Corbon, which is said to have ancietnly communicated by fire signals with Amboise. A group of wild-looking children seemed to come out almost from the earth, as we drifted under the cliff, but they were too high above for us to note the no doubt reciprocal astonishment on their faces.
Mont Louis, a little farther on, was another village of excavated huts, and the identical spot where Henry II. was reconciled with St. Thomas à Becket but a short time before the assassination of the latter.

And then the shadow of a big city fell on the river, and for the first time since leaving Paris we pulled between high stone walls.
CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TOURS—WE FIND THE FIFTH MAN—THE CAFÉ CHANTANT—LA P'TITE EN ROUGE.

We found excellent moorings for the boat, and safe from adventurous *gamins*, between the large floating baths and quay. It is impossible to speak too highly of these baths and their extreme comfort and cleanliness. You could either have your *piqueur* in the river, or the white porcelain or metal *baignoirs* inside. Leave your oars and impedimenta with the proprietors, and feel that everything was as safe as in your own boat-house. The great length of the oars standing against and overtopping the baths, seemed to excite the astonishment of the youngsters, who evidently fancied we must be of corresponding size, and quite expected to see four giants come out; but must have been sadly disappointed at the four medium individuals who issued in the usual way through the ordinary door. No lounging up through old-fashioned streets as at Beaugency, and chatting with the people at their doors, but a hackney coach and driver with shiny hat to take us
to the hotel. There was no interest in so big a place, and so like every other town, except in the magnificence of its tradition and venerable records, and the special interest of coming so suddenly from the desert river upon so large a city, and going from it again in a few strokes into the same wilderness of sand and water.

But we found him at last—the fifth man, just as we entered the Hôtel de l'Univers. The man who had been reading hard in France, and couldn't come. Expecting our arrival he had gone out to meet us. Taking with him a little book called "Happy Hours with Logarithms," he left Tours before sunrise, and, going some miles up the river, sat high above the rock village on the top brick of the Lanterne de la Roche Corbon, hoping to catch a glimpse of the boat. But the weird interest of the book so crept upon him, that he let us drift by unnoticed.

From this evening we marked him as our own, and insisted that he should take his seat in the boat, at all events to the end of the Loire. A good oar and the pleasantest of companions, he was a welcome acquisition to the crew.

We went to the café chantant and heard better singing than can be found in London, and without any trace of the vulgarity that distinguishes the music halls. We were just in time to hear a very bright chansonnette by a little lady called "La p'tite en rouge," who was evidently
an enormous favourite. She described a man her guardian wanted her to marry as odious, detailed all his bad qualities, and in the refrain of each couplet appealed to the audience, Aimeriez-vous un homme comme ça?" "Non" came back in stentorian unison from every voice in the room. "Eh bien—allez," &c., &c., and the song had to be repeated three times. That, and another by a stout lady in yellow—"Mon petit, mon petit, mon petit chien, created, and very justly, a perfect furore.

Now some of these people had but little voice, but every one of them knew how to sing, and the grace of their hands in every gesture was inimitable.

Comparisons are sometimes unavoidable, and it is impossible to go to even a café chantant without regretting that the same grace and intelligence cannot be found for a native opéra comique in London.

"Renouvellement des consommations" is classical French for another pint of beer; but traced in large white characters on a black board, and placed conspicuously on the stage in front of the curtain, it means that you are to call for further refreshment. The performance is interrupted for a general "Give your orders, gentlemen, the waiter's in the room"—or more politely, "Messieurs, renouvez vos consommations;" and if you don't renouveler you are considered to have had your legitimate share of the entertainment.
We spent a long morning over Tours—our new oar-cicerone; the greater part in the cathedral, which is the grandest monument of the place.

The stained windows, especially those where you see the arms of St. Louis, and of his mother Blanche of Castile, are very beautiful.

To those who care about old books and MSS. the Bibliothèque of Tours will be of unusual interest. There is the Evangile in gold letters upon vellum, upon which the Kings of France took the oaths, as honorary canons of the old abbey church of St. Martin; a Bible, printed at Mayence by the inventors of printing; *Les Heures de Charles V.*, a magnificent manuscript on vellum, and rare illuminations; an illuminated Livy of the 14th century.
CHAPTER XXXIX.


Late as it was—nearly four in the afternoon—we preferred dropping down the river to the first place we should come to than staying at Tours. It being Sunday, the people were about and lined the quays to watch us depart. Sent on Coxswain with the luggage by rail, and found the immediate advantage in the lightening of the boat.

The transition from houses, churches and city walls, seemed almost instantaneous to the quiet of the lonely river, so swiftly did the current hurry us down.

All the country round Tours was very flat, and but for the river decidedly monotonous; and, worst of all, we were passing through the most dangerous of all the quicksands on the Loire. The deaths are so frequent about Tours that there are stringent regulations for bathers, especially among the soldiers, who are in this respect under the strictest supervision.
But a few days before our arrival six young men had gone out in the evening and were bathing not far from the town. All were swimmers; but on crossing what they supposed to be a safe sand-bank the whole six were drawn down, and at once disappeared. It was one of the shifting quicksands which, to touch, is hopeless to escape. This accident and one still more awful, where a man was within a few yards of his brother and saw him suddenly sucked in without being able to stretch out a hand to save him, made us collect every information from the pilots as to the discovery of the barge channel. At first it is a little bewildering, for, extending across the vast river, you see a thin forest of aimless, meaningless sticks—willow saplings and branches—some straight, others half broken and bent downwards from the top. First in a straight line, then crossing and recrossing from bank to bank in most irregular fashion. At times you must wind between them, and when not many are together you have to leave those that are upright on the right hand, and those that are bent on the left, to be sure of being in deep water. The channel is at times so narrow, and the rush of the current so terrific, as to swing the boat round and crush the sticks under its rapid shoot. The great difficulty was to prevent the outriggers being entangled in them, which would have been a prompt and perhaps disastrous upset. So great was the winding of
this channel, two or more being often parallel to each other across the river, with quicksands between, that the pilots estimated the increased distance as five miles in every twenty. And every hour below Tours the stream grew stronger, and in narrow places rendered the navigation of the boat more difficult.

On the other hand, we were now entering the most beautiful part of the Loire, "Ce voyage peut être compté à la fois parmi les plus charmants et les plus sérieux qu'on puisse faire." Leaving for good the low monotonous banks for a country that F. Bernard describes, "Tout ce qu'on aime s'y trouve réuni: a delightful temperature—the first ray of the meridian sun, the last breath of the north wind. Tender and savage aspects; vines creeping vertically, and abrupt hillsides, as on the banks of the Rhone; the green meadows and verdure of Normandy; fields of mulberry trees as in the plains of Valence, and wooded tablelands as in the Ardennes. Busy cities and laughing villages; les grandes perspectives où la lumière abonde, et les retraites que l'ombre couvre et rend solitaires. The geography of France is represented in its entirety in a marvellous combination. Go elsewhere, and you will see something to wonder at and admire; but it will be the north, or the south, or the Alps, or Provence—the Pyrenees, Normandy, or Flanders: it is only on the banks of the Loire that you will find France complete, and in all its varied grandeur."
Further, it is doubly interesting from its history and reminiscences. From the paganism of Cæsar, to the Christianity of St. Martin and St. Florent, the two great apostles of the Loire. In its actual scenes and traditions of Goths and Visigoths, Saracens and Franks, Normans and Plantagenets. The chosen dwelling-place of the kings of France, the battle-field of so many armies, the scene of the ceaseless efforts for Breton independency, and the stage of the royalist and dramatic insurrection of La Vendée.

"Dans cette vallée, si vous marchez, vous foulerez une ruine; si vous élevez la voix, vous reveillerez un écho du passé!"

We were told that the large market gardens near Tours are so wonderfully fertile, that they produce four crops in the year. We can vouch for the exquisite flavour of the peaches, which henceforth formed an integral part of every meal, as well as a prelude to breakfast, luncheon, and dinner.

The river was still wild and deserted till we pulled by Savonnières, a very ancient little town, where the Romans established savonnéries, whence its name.

The Caves gouttières are worth seeing here. Cavern grottoes, and from the vaulted roofs water constantly trickling, filled with a kind of calcareous salt, which forms curious crystal deposits. They are mostly visited at night, for the fantastic effect of the torchlight flashing from the white arches.
NARROW ESCAPE FROM QUICKSAND.

Opposite to Savonnières was a strange Gothic château, very deserted looking, and seemingly all towers and gables, perched as usual on a high cliff, which half way down was pierced by another rock village. At the foot was the town of Luynes—the same name as the castle—though both were formerly called Maillé, and as late as the seventeenth century. Close to Luynes are the ruins of the only Roman aqueduct known in the west of France north of the Loire.

It was just below here that we nearly made acquaintance with a quicksand, and escaped what might have been the fatal accident of the cruise. We were rowing hard, and in mid-stream, when, without any warning, there came a shock that all but sent us into the water. Two, Stroke, and our new oar, whom faute de mieux we may call Number Five, jumped out, fortunately on the right side, for the "Marie" swung round with an impetuosity that would have taken us off our legs—though the tide very nearly did that;—and before there was time to lay hold of the boat, the rush of current caught her, lifted her bodily off the bank, and sent her drifting at an amazing pace down stream. Bow and Three were on board, but incredible as it may seem, before there was time to get oars out and make headway, they had been taken some two or three hundred yards below where we were left. With only two men pulling, and no coxswain, the forty feet of the boat made it no easy task to manage in such whirlpool
currents,—and to meet them half way, we got on to the dry sand to walk down. The first step, Stroke sank up to his knee, and without the slightest resistance from the sand, and might possibly have gone on further, but that Two at the same moment went down still deeper. We were just able to draw out and warn Five, who was behind, but when we turned to go back, the foot tracks had disappeared from the sand, and on all sides we sank more or less. Speaking from the recollection of what at all events one of the crew felt at the time, I think that even a non-swimmer would have given all he possessed to have taken his chance in fathomless water. That we were on the edge of one of the shifting quicksands was self-evident, and the unpleasant part of the feeling was, not knowing where to turn, lest one step might prove one too many. The danger would have been very serious if all the crew, or even all but one, had left the boat, and she had so slipped from us. As it was, five or ten minutes must have elapsed before Bow and Three came back, and we finally got safe on board the little ship.

Another, but honest sandbank stopped us off Cinq Mars—(supposed to be a corruption of Campus Martius). There was an odd square tower called the Pile de cinq mars, about 100 feet in height, and some twelve or thirteen feet wide on each face, crowned by four pinnacles rising above each of its angles. There had formerly been five of these
pinnacles, but one was thrown down in a storm. It was built by the Romans in the third century, but no one seems to have found out its meaning or probable use. They call it "le sphinx des bords de la Loire."

The river Cher, coming down from Chenonceaux, joins the Loire here, after running parallel with it for fifteen miles, but goes on again in the same direction till it joins the Indre nine or ten miles below.

This was one of the pleasant evening pulls, in those wonderful sunsets that we never saw but on the Loire, and threw up such strange colours on the sand wastes. The sense of loneliness on the river was vanishing, even though the human interest was in mid-air, in the pretty white villages that stole out from the lime cliffs and were now glistening in the flood light of the setting sun.
CHAPTER XL.

LANGEAIS—THE FÊTE—THE ROSIÈRE—THE VILLAGE DANCE—HOW BOW AND TWO ELECTRIFIED THE PEASANTS—“EST-CE QU’IL EST CHARMANT, CHARMANT, LE PETIT BLOND?”—THE CHURCH.

The sound of music came up the stream on a faint breeze, and in a few strokes we shot into the midst of a village fête. It was Langeais, and the green slopes of the little town bordering the river were thronged with people.

There was a pretty mingling of colours in the dresses of the men, as in those of the women. The paysans wore broad-brimmed hats, gay waistcoats, knee-breeches, and shoes with silver buckles. The paysannes had four short skirts of different colour, and bright ribbons in the hair. Some had the silver arrow, as on the banks of the Rhine.

One young girl had a curious bouquet. It was made of artificial flowers, with a pearl of silvered glass in the centre. And scattered through the flowers,—half buried among the petals,—were small convex mirrors. It was the bouquet
given to her, according to the custom of the country, by her betrothed on their engagement; and the mirrors were supposed to tarnish if at any time her fiancé should ever, even in thought be unfaithful to her. Not much fear, one would have thought, for the little maiden was a flower picture in her two little wooden shoes. Where all her companions were dark, she had the softest fair hair, creeping in tiny curls from under her white cap. The extreme simplicity of her blue dress was in happy contrast with the heavy gold cross on her breast and the long gold earrings. So many asked her to dance, but she refused all. The mirrors would never be clouded by this loyal little village rosière.

The dances resembled not a little those of their kindred Celts,—the Irish reels:—only these people began slowly, sometimes singing to the music, and gradually quickening till they worked into perfect enthusiasm. The bystanders even were affected, clapped their hands, encouraged the dancers, and evinced their sympathy by the motion of their bodies.

Bow and Two had been looking on for some time, and as if they could stand it no longer, went up to two bright brunettes who were standing by their mother, and bowing to them, asked for the honour of a dance.

What was our astonishment to see them dash into the wildest of Christy Minstrel break-downs and double
shuffle! Nothing could be more unlike what the peasants were dancing,—but curiously enough it expressed the very measure and rhythm of the music. Best of all they danced it to perfection,—if it had been their profession they could not have been more brilliant.

The people drew round. They had never seen anything like this before, and began to murmur their admiration. The brunettes were going beautifully after their own graceful fashion, and you could see from their eyes how delighted they were with their partners. The other dancers gave up for the time to wonder at the skilful but extraordinary performance. The subtle excitement crept upon Bow and Two, till they almost reached the subdued frenzy of dancing Dervishes. If Bow had a _pas seul_, Two played an invisible banjo, or banged an unseen tambourine on his head, hands, and feet. The effect of this was simply electrical,—and when Bow, yielding the floor to Two, went in for the real original "walk round," they thought it must be a Druidical inspiration, and broke out, "_Ah! est-ce qu'il est charmant, charmant, le petit blond?_"

But it was the end of the fête, and when the twilight came down, they all went up to the church for _salut_. The Curé said a few words to them, and they went their ways. Some over the hills, others to a neighbouring village, others in the old ferry-boat across the river, where Stroke
was taking repeated headers in pursuit of an antique goblet of Three's, which he had gracefully lost for him on landing.

And going back to our hotel, when it was getting dark, we looked in again at the church, and saw the little rosière kneeling still where we had left her when the salut was over and all had gone away, under the silver lamp of Our Lady’s altar.
CHAPTER XLI.

LANGEAIS — COTTAGE OF THE ROSIÈRE — METTRAY — ROCHECOTTE — TINY STORM — THE WINDMILLS.

LANGEAIS is one of the very old Loire towns, and Saint Martin preached there in the fourth century. It is a wonderfully quiet old place, lying back from the river, and beyond the green slopes where the fête was held. It had a tiny stream of its own, apart from the Loire, that stole up from an old mill-wheel, backed by a little church, and with gardens and cottage balconies on its miniature banks.

In one of the cottages lived la Rosière, close by the little church, and within sound of the mill-wheel—for it was her fête day, and we saw people bringing flowers and fruit, and talking with her through the open lattice.

Close to the little stream stood our hotel, where the loveliest melons were to be had almost for the asking—for Langeais was, par excellence, the town for melons of all in Touraine or Anjou.

To see and know Touraine, you must not be content with the banks of the river, but dive into the rich country
on either side, and be well repaid by the quiet villages that are little known and frequented, and the old châteaux either standing or in ruins, that mark at each step the history of the country.

We had a merry pull of seven or eight miles to St. Patrice, close to the château of Rochecotte, which gave its name to a celebrated chief of the Chouans. It had a large and rich collection of paintings and objets d'art. One room especially was devoted by Madame de Castellane, the niece of Talleyrand, to all the decorations of her uncle, and the presents he had received from different sovereigns. Another interesting château close by, is that of Usse, in the canton of Rigny, belonging to the family of Rochejacquelein. Here again are the caves gouttières that we had seen near Blois, and a curious intermittting fountain.

We lunched at a very pretty spot, la chapelle sur Loire, or la chapelle blanche—but again, enormous wastes of sands. These, however, disappeared for the time as we drew near Candes, where the Vienne comes down from Chinon to join the Loire. The stream had been gradually opening out, but at this junction its breadth was immense. It might have been a mile and a half, or even greater, for it had all the vastness of a big sea bay. And unluckily the wind got up at a most unfortunate moment, just as someone's outrigger gave way, and a thole-pin fell into the water.
There happened to be a spare one, and with no little difficulty we got ashore, and borrowed the necessary tools for repairing. For half an hour the wind made itself excessively disagreeable, and owing to the very erratic course of the stick channel, we had to go right out into mid-stream, cross to the other bank, and recross again, and this in a heavy sea that was as much as the boat could do to live in. It was once or twice remarkably close to a swamp, when we were fully a mile from shore, and Two, who was steering, kept his eye-glass fixed firmly upon Cording.

But the wind happily went down as suddenly as it came, and for the rest of the day we were under a warm sun and in smooth water.

The first view of Saumur was very striking. All the windmills seemed to come out to meet us, and straggled over the long line of hills on the far bank. With the deep glow of the sunset upon them, they looked like so many goblin schoolboys gambolling on the summit.

Where we pulled up for sketching and a quiet pipe, we could see the outline of a big castle in the distance, and the spire of a church. An idea of the distance may be formed, from the fact that we were three or more miles from the town. We actually met some one to talk to on the bank—the first man we had seen, too, for over fifteen miles. A broad-shouldered, powerful peasant, with his
son, cutting down osiers and lading his boat to punt across the stream.

We drifted down in the evening, slowly as we could, to enjoy the grandeur of the river behind us, and the beauty of the old town growing larger at every instant.

A cavalry regiment was crossing the bridge as we dropped under, and the music of the band with clanging cymbals echoed brightly through the arches as the "Marie" eased up at her moorings.

We stood on the bridge till it was nearly dark, Bow sketching the wild river leaving the town; its water between the dusky banks, like a vast mirror, save when the ominous sandbanks and quicksands stole across like sinister shadows.
CHAPTER XLII.


The left bank up the river from Saumur, forms an escarpment that rises like a cliff. And here you can see the origin of the present town, in groups of dwellings cut out from the soft stone high above the quay, and up to the foot of the Castle. These grottoes were the first houses of one of the most coquette towns on the Loire. Saumur at that time was called Mur, Murus, for in effect the escarpment and the grottoes had altogether the aspect of a lofty wall and human dovecot. Later and by degrees, houses began to be built on the descent to the Thouet, which here joins the Loire, and this new town overshadowing the hamlet, became Saumur, or sous le mur.

The invasion of the Normans in the ninth century dealt a heavy blow to the town, and the population emigrated almost en masse.
THE LOIRE FROM SAUMUR.
The renaissance of Saumur was owing to the relics of St. Florent. St. Florent was the first apostle of Christianity in Anjou. He came to Montglonne, between Angers and Nantes, towards the end of the third century. Dying there, his relics were preserved in a monastery founded in his honour. But when the Normans came, the monks took flight, carrying with them the relics of the Saint. The account goes on to say, that the monks took refuge in Bourgogne, at the monastery of Tournus. But when the storm was over, and they returned to Montglonne, they were not allowed to carry the relics with them. Not for twenty years were they recovered; when Absalon, a novice, brought them back to Anjou, and they were solemnly deposited by Thibault le Tricheur, the reigning Count of Blois, to whom Saumur then belonged, in the monastery of St. Florent. From that time, Saumur had new life—the people came back—it became a celebrated pilgrimage, and began to develop the importance it has since obtained.

For more than a hundred years, Saumur has been a great military centre, and school for cavalry.

The people have the reputation of being somewhat vain and pretentious, and are for that reason called the Gascons of the Loire. Very jealous of the supremacy of Angers, as chef-lieu of the department of the Maine and Loire.

We found an excellent wine at the hotel, called Vin de
Saumur, which they manufacture as a kind of champagne, and professedly champanise for exportation.

Bright and joyous as it looks from the river, it is almost dull and sombre among the houses and through the streets. This may happen in one way, possibly from the dykes that are built round the town to protect it from its great enemy the Loire, and in addition, the inundations of the Thouet. Notwithstanding, they have more than once proved ineffectual, and people yet talk of the great overflow of 1615, which is called the déluge de Saumur.

The castle, as usual, towers in solitary grandeur above everything else. The Hôtel de Ville is perhaps the prettiest building in the town; but, beyond the brightness and life of the troops, all the animation comes from the spectral windmills in their ghostly dances on the heights.

Some remains of the old abbey of St. Florent still exist near the École de Cavalerie, beyond the Thouet, and are now a convent.

We drove over to see the celebrated dolmens on the Bordeaux road, which, curiously, like all the Celtic monuments, are to be found only on the left bank of the river. The dolmen de Bagneux is said to be the finest that exists. A rude temple, more like a hut, and is composed of fifteen enormous slabs of stone, of which four
form the roof. There was a little cottage belonging to the dolmen-keeper and his wife, very pretty, and covered with flowers. They had a book for the names of visitors, and the first we saw on the list was, ✠ Emile, Evêque d'Angers.

There were scraps of poetry, improvised or otherwise. Among them:

Saumur, tu fus ma belle,
Le berceau de mes jours,
Et comme l'hirondelle
On y revient toujours.

Les sauvages Druides,
De sang humain avides,
Élevèrent ces monuments
Qui de leurs fureurs rappellent les instants.

The extreme antiquity—3000 years, said the guide—was overpowering: and by way of distraction, we induced Two to mount on the roof of the temple, took away the ladder, and pelted him playfully with horse-chestnuts for a merry half-hour. This vastly amused the ancient showman, who called his wife to watch ces gracieux farceurs.

We added the crew of the "Marie" to the other signatures, and made tracks once more for the river.

On leaving Saumur, the Loire flowed anciently to the right of the levée where the railway now is; the Vienne on its left, and the Authron on its right. The three rivers uniting when the inundations came, so flooded
the intermediate land, as to leave it when the waters subsided, a sterile and profitless waste of marsh. In the ninth century, the great enterprise was undertaken to throw back the Loire into the bed of the Vienne, and keep it there by a dyke of more than forty miles in length. This dyke, which commences at Bourgueil, and goes on to Ponts de Cé, is called the *Levée de la Loire*—and is the same as that at Blois; commenced actually by Louis le Débonnaire, and finished under Henry II. of England—though the original notion is attributed to Charlemagne.

The valley is here called the *grande vallée* of the Loire, and the Communes have a history of their own apart from other towns and villages. The inhabitants have never at any time been subject to feudal service or quit-rents. The lands were given to them exempt from all tribute, and from their very origin, they themselves have been free. The houses are neither châteaux, nor, on the other hand, poor cabins, but substantial cottages with an expression of decided comfort.

They seem to work chiefly on the alluvial lands and sand islands, where an enormous quantity of hemp, called *chanvre*, grows to a height of some ten or twelve feet, and is one of the special cultivations of Anjou.

Opposite St. Martin, there still remains at Chenehutte, on the left bank, a Roman camp called by the people
Châtelier, and situated on a hill overlooking the river. A vast irregular polygon, and nearly a mile in circumference. And close to, at a place called Les Sables, the peasants pointed out the site of a supposed unknown town, which they called Oroannes or Oroat, and where from time to time they said débris had been found of tombs indicating a Christian origin.

Further on we passed the largest we had yet seen of the rock hamlets, called Les Tuffeaux, from the craie-tuffeau or lime-stone in which it is excavated, and which has now been worked for more than twelve hundred years.

The hamlet had a church of the ninth century, and close to, in the village of St. Jean, were some curious ruins of an old hermitage.

Having a rather longer journey than usual from Saumur to Angers, we utilized the time by lunching in the boat instead of landing.

Lunch in an outrigger, where it is supposed to be necessary to part one's hair in the middle in order to preserve equilibrium, sounds awkward, but I doubt if ever garden party or the most fanciful al fresco meal was half so enjoyable, and I think it is one of the incidents of the cruise that we all look back upon with pleasant recollection. Long use had made the "Marie" so comfortable that you could lie down at full length, or improvise the cosiest of arm-chairs,
your back on the stretcher, legs over the thwart, and body generally in the form of a graceful N.

Screened from the hot sun under peaceful umbrellas, that acted at the same time as sails, we floated as many as two or three miles. Each one had a bottle under his stretcher, and with ingenious hawser let it cool in the rippling water as we drifted. In this land of plenty, cold chicken and partridge were little dearer than bread and butter—this was no doubt owing, in great measure, to the freemasonry that existed between our Coxswain and the various chefs—and peaches, melons, and grapes were to be had almost for the asking. Then the peaceful pipe and lazy enjoyment of being carried down by a swift stream, without any exertion, and only the danger of sandbanks ahead, but Bow kept a good look-out through an old hole in his gingham.

The scenery grew more beautiful as we dropped down, and at times the hills were magnificent. At Gennes especially, where a fine old church, l'Église de Saint-Eusèbe, crowned the summit of a little mountain, with glorious view.

Not very long ago in this same neighbourhood, they were cutting down a thick wood that had been the growth of long centuries, and coming to a spot near a grotto—la grotte de l'Ermitage, they found deep buried in the side of a hill, the remains of a vast amphitheatre. Close to
and above where the arena stood, was an aqueduct which carried the waters from the Mazerolles springs to Gennes. And going on further, they found the clear indications of an old Roman road.

There was a strange fountain somewhere about here, of the same name as the château to which it belongs, but which I now forget, whose waters are said by the peasants to be so deadly as to paralyse men or animals who drink of them, and so affect geese or other birds that bathe there, as to cause their young to grow up deformed monstrosities.

We this day actually met a man in a boat punting up stream, and if he had not been nearly a mile out of our course we would have crossed over to shake hands with him, as the first living thing we had encountered on the lonely river. He was going remarkably fast too, and evidently knew the currents well.

One of the finest bits was at les Rosiers, where the river opened to a big lake with the town far away on the right, and a long bridge buried in the centre, in thick trees. It was the great nursery for silkworms, and was reported to have a pretty church, only too far out of our way.

And at the foot of the hills on the left bank opposite la Menitrée are the ruins of the abbey of St. Maur, the great Benedictine monastery, whose monks in the seventeenth century, following in the footsteps and tradition of
their order, gave to the world the "Gallia Christiana," "L'Art de Vérifier les Dates," "La Collection des Historiens de la France," "Celtic Antiquities," and other works, which represented as well as genius the labour of many lives.

Every inch on the banks of this great river takes you back over twelve and thirteen hundred years, and creates thus a distinct charm that adds wonderfully to its own intrinsic interest.

Coming down to Ponts de Cé, where the Maine joins the Loire, and where the great Levée or dyke, which had followed us for one hundred miles, at last ends, we entered on a scene of panoramic splendour—the river opening out here to a grand breadth of two miles.

We had rowed, allowing for the variations of the pilot channel, about forty miles, and considering that we had started late in the morning, and it was not yet five, it was steady work, including the laziness of our lunch drift.

But we were fresh as early larks, till we turned to pull up the last six or seven miles to Angers. Dead in the teeth of a heavy current, there would have been little to grumble at, if a strong head-wind had not raised a lumpy sea to stop the way.

It was an inhospitable welcome from the Angers river, and such hard work that we would have been heartily glad for the excuse of a friendly white village to ease up en route.
ARRIVAL AT ANGERS.
We never before encountered such collar work, and right pleased were we to creep in, after nearly two hours' tugging and toiling, through the sombre shadows of the dark fortress. It is well called "Black Angers," and only through the interstices of the castle and under the arches of the bridge, did the flickering sunset steal in strange contrast.

Straight under the two bridges till we came to a floating blanchisserie—a large shed where some twenty or thirty blanchisseuses were finishing the day's work, and in time for the finale chorus of battoirs. Scarcely less surprised than if Caesar's cohorts had come back again, were they to see the "Marie" shoot between the walls of this city of so many centuries, and chain and padlock under their very nose. Silence for a moment, and then such a clatter of tongues, in voluble but unintelligible patois.

Darkness came down almost at once, and with it a chorus of hunting horns on the bank opposite to where we moored. It had a strange wild effect through the dark and across the water; and long after we had dined, and turned in, we heard them far into the night.
CHAPTER XLIII.

BLACK ANGERS—PEOPLE DON'T TROUBLE THEMSELVES WITH OVERWORK—
GREAT SLATE QUARRIES—LOVELINESS OF PONTS DE CÉ—PRETTY FRUIT
GIRLS—BOW SKETCHES ONE—"C'EST BIEN MOI."

Angers looked brighter the next morning, as we came from the quarter on the other side of the river called la Doutre. There was plenty of life about, troops going over the bridge, and fishermen hauling their boats up from the Loire. Three rivers flow down to Angers—the Loir, the Sarthe, and the Mayenne. The two latter meet at the town, and the united streams take the name of the Maine, down to the Loire.

It is said that Angers was first called la ville noire by Péan de la Tuilerie, a chanoine, on account of the quantity of dark slate used in the buildings. But a glance at the fortress is quite sufficient to convey the impression, without the aid of any other colouring. A black mass of colossal ruin, this old giant of the Loire, with its five sombre towers that protect the town.

No town in France has perhaps a grander ancestry than
Angers. Henry II. held his court here frequently, and a cheerful court it must have been from the account of Pierre de Blois. "J'ai vu quelquefois servi à la table des grands du vin si plein de lie, qu'on ne pouvait s'empêcher de fermer les yeux, de grincer les dents et de pincer les lèvres avec d'horribles nausées, moins pour le boire, que pour l'avaler."

We found it a bright place in itself. The old fortifications have made way for gay boulevards along the quay, and diving through these you enter the labyrinth of antique and narrow streets, that run up the side of the rocky hill, sometimes so steep as to be inaccessible to carriages. The old houses are charmingly picturesque, faced with heavy gables and oak beams in fanciful patterns, and generally of black and white colour. Oftentimes in the quiet lanes, you will find the doorways and cornices richly carved, and lattice windows of old and quaint design.

From the quay was a narrow opening, discovering a lofty granite rock, at the foot of which were some very old houses half carved out. A stone spiral staircase led up the rock to an upper town, and there were four Grecian pillars crowned and intertwined with clematis and vines. This had a peculiar effect, with shops on either side. The road had to wind round the town to reach the castle, and was then quite steep enough for horses. We could just catch a distant glimpse of the Loire, but a magnificent
view of the country and the winding Maine, where barges were thronging down from Le Mans and Alençon. And looking at the castle you could well believe that it was the grandest of the feudal châteaux in France. Tower after tower, seventeen in number, and eighty feet in height, surrounding it. Very broad at the base, they rise close against the walls, and alternate with hoops of dark slate and white stone.

There are still the rings on the walls to which prisoners were fastened, and the same on the floor called La Crapaudine. The last prisoners of importance were the Vendéens, nearly 2000 in number, in 1793.

It struck us that the townspeople led a very quiet peaceful life, and were not overburdened with business. It is actually said of them that—"par point d'honneur on aime à prendre rang parmi les gens qui font rien." They ramble through commerce just enough to keep things going, and yet the position of the town on three important rivers would indicate great activity.

They seem to take more interest in the great slate quarries than in anything else. These are only two hours from Angers at Trélazé, and the principal are la PAPERIE, les Grands-Carreaux and le Grand-Bouc. They are decidedly worth visiting, both on account of their enormous extent, and from the knowledge that they have been unremittingly worked from the Middle Ages.
Some of them go down in the earth 500 feet, and it is dizzy work to watch the men, like so many bees, clamber up the sides on vertical and flexible ladders. These quarries were for centuries the absolute property of the workmen themselves, till by degrees they fell into the hands of a few speculative capitalists.

It is a favourite promenade for the Angers people—but only secondary to Ponts de Cé.

There are not many towns in the world have such a suburb as this. Water villages that hide among the trees of some half dozen islands stretching across the river over a breadth of two miles. The great bridge of 109 arches connecting them, comes down from the Pontes Cæsaris—hence the present name—built by Julius Cæsar, who established here the large camp de Frémur.

The loveliness of the place baffles description—both from the sense of distance and the ever-changing variety.

Angers comes down on Sundays and jours de fête, to eat the dainty bouilletures for which Ponts de Cé is famed—paddle or sail from island to island when there is no sea on, and dance in the gloaming after their own quiet fashion.

The gendarmerie on the island nearest the left bank was formerly the old château of René, the last of the Dukes of Angers.

Pastoral gendarmes who never bothered themselves
about our passports, but nodded quietly over their black pipes as we dropped by.

There is a very shepherd and shepherdess air about the place, and the men wear low-crowned hats. We saw here the prettiest women on the Loire—especially the fruit-sellers, some of whom are absolutely beautiful, and dressed in perfect taste.

We bought peaches for a halfpenny from a little lady in lace mittens, who had long fair hair that the Breton traders would have given much to possess.

Bow ate all her peaches, sketched the bright little face, and hadn’t the heart to carry it away, when she looked at it, blushed and said, "C’est bien moi!"

"What a place to settle down at!" said Two.
CHAPTER XLIV.

We leave Angers—its bright Villegiature—l'île Bénuard—the Rock Chapel—our pleasant luncheon—Two's quaint old song—Three as an accompanyist—Blue Beard.

It was much pleasanter work swinging down the Maine from Black Angers in the fresh morning, than tugging up against it after a fifty-mile pull.

Somehow it looked better too, and was in reality a very pretty river. There were some ranges of rock, in fine
contrast with soft, green sward and mossy banks at the foot, and a picturesque château half way.

But coming into the Loire once more at Ponts de Cé, was like leaving the river for the ocean, and as to pace, we felt the instantaneous change when we shot into the great current.

After all Angers is not to be so found in the town, as in the pleasant country houses of its villégiature. The little work they do in the city seems to necessitate an ever-lasting repose on the river. For twelve or fifteen miles we passed the prettiest maisonnnettes and villas, all belonging to the Angevine bourgeoisie.

There is everything around them to attract the eye. The Loire still widening at every moment, and rising into hills and abrupt precipices from the water's edge. Orchards, rose gardens, vineyards blending into one golden colour. Hedges of acacia, rich walnut trees, and a country so teeming with fertility, that the yellow wheat shoots up in abundance even beneath the fruit trees.

In contrast—the wildness of the cliff hamlets, where the cottage chimneys steal through heavy vines, that conceal the rocky roofs.

We came upon an island—l'île Béhuard, a clustering wood rising from the water-depths. There was a chapel to Our Lady built upon an unbroken rock, whose floor surface had never been levelled, but stood in rugged
uneven points. The Christian captives from Algiers had hung, as *ex voto* offerings, their chains upon the walls, among the *fleurs-de-lis* and royal arms. And there was an old portrait of Louis XI., who honoured the place with particular devotion.

The rabble of the Revolution sacking other churches, had either forgotten or were unaware of the existence of this little rock chapel hidden away on the great river.

Among the vine heights was one called the *Coulée de Serrant*, not far from a château of the same name, belonging to an Irish gentleman, Count Walsh, and whose family has held it since 1730. We had already made acquaintance with the wine which grows in the grounds, and is said to be the best in Anjou.

Bouroou had gone on with the luggage — luncheon stowed away carefully (we never knew what it was till we unpacked it) — each man's bottle in its right place — the old pipe and Wills' Bristol in the thwart box — a glorious stream and all the magnificence of a September day. Five healthy fellows in

"The jolliest boat in the world."

A spin of ten or fifteen miles, till we pulled up under the shadow of an old mill.

There was no one in the mill—not even a ghost—or Two, who was Coxswain, would have waked them up with
OUR PLEASANT LUNCHEON.
his favourite song, which, hundreds of years old as it was, we liked—better than the modern Bacchanalian:

Three accompanying on the paper and comb—an instrument many may smile at as belonging to the nursery,—but till they have heard it in a master's hands, will never know how strangely plaintive it is on the water.

At Chalonnes was a church founded by St. Maurille in the sixth century. The people later on, used to come in such crowds to hear the monks, that they were obliged to preach in open air, and the evidence yet remains in a balcony round the bell-tower, which was used for a pulpit.

We went by the castle, or rather ruins, of the real and original Blue Beard—the Château de Chantocé. His name was Gilles de Retz, and the earlier part of his life seems to have been sufficiently blameless. He even fought with honour against the English and at Orleans with Jeanne d'Arc.

The second was not so respectable. He went in for magic, and found it necessary to his art to have a constant
supply of the blood of infants. The people not liking it, he was tried, and condemned to death at Nantes. Eighty skeletons were found in his Château of Machecoul, but only forty in the one we passed.

And now, twenty miles from Angers, we were leaving Anjou.
CHAPTER XLV.


Brittany on one side of us, on the other La Vendée. Ingrandes, a bright-looking town on a long water terrace, marked the boundary of the Départements of Maine et Loire and La Loire Inférieure. There used to be an old fortress here, called the bastille d’Ingrandes (Ingressus Andium), which defended the entrance to the Anjou territory.

About Montrelais, where the great coal pits are worked, some of them extending under the river, we were detained by several awkward sandbanks, hidden from view till we were right on top of them. The strain on the boat from the rush of water was so great, that there was danger at times of her being smashed. Where the channel crossed in a direct line from shore to shore, it was all but impossible to hold up broadside against the full swing of the stream, and not unfrequently, before we had time to get out, did the current hurry us par la grande vitesse over
the scraping shingle. In one of these sand passages, the boat swung round impetuously and hung on the very edge of a vertical bank—on one side the water torrent only above our ankles, but the other, for all we knew, any amount of fathoms deep. It was as much as the five could do to keep the boat from being swept over keel upwards, and either dragging us with her, or leaving us on the bank in undisturbed contemplation. We used to laugh at and enjoy them at the time, but looking back, the wonder is that there was not an accident, or more than one in the 250 miles of the river.

We had intended pushing on to a place called Ancenis, of which we knew nothing but its position on the map. Evening, however, had come down, and a late September was beginning to leave little twilight after sundown. We somehow got out of the main river and were dropping down a backwater behind a long island. The banks were densely wooded on either side, giving the appearance of a river through a forest. It was very desolate, and the thickness of the trees screened the setting sun. We went on for a long time, till it looked as if we had lost our way, and come upon some water drift where no one could have been before, so extreme was the sense of isolation. But at last, winding out from the shadow of the heavy foliage, we came upon the loveliest spot we had yet seen either on Seine or Loire. It was the village of St. Florent.
And there was a sunset such as I in my lifetime had never before seen—nor dreamt even that anything could be half so beautiful. There was a long lake of tremulous gold, and sands of amethyst, and colours so strange and new, that puzzling over them at the time, we tried, but could find no names that would describe them. Then rising close to us, and between all this, a great cliff—a precipice of black rock crowned with a white church. Patches of red and purple on the rock, and fisher huts straggling down, all bathed in the wondrous light that came from the water.

But it was fast dying out, and still we were not at Ancenis. We had a long discussion—some voting strongly for going on, till we thought of what the quicksands might be after nightfall, and the possible consequences of another vertical sand-bank when it was dark.

From where we were we could see nothing but a very poor cabaret, and a rude wooden tent on wheels, with a wild-looking gypsy and her child squatting on the bank,
We landed, however, and found that by walking a mile or so, we should find a train to take us to Ancenis for the night, meet the faithful Bouroou, and so come back next day to row on. Two, Three, and Five strolled through the village to explore, and Bow and Stroke went on to the bridge to see the last of the fading daylight, and watch the night creep up over the dying colours.

It is the one evening of our cruise that has left an impression as fresh and vivid as if it was only yesterday—but it is as hopeless to attempt the description of such a scene, as it was at the time for one's thoughts to assume any definite or expressed shape.

There are things that cannot be told—and when this sunset and twilight died, it was gone for ever. We could only look and wonder—at the beautiful river, of which we were on a side lake, the main channel being half a mile or more away—at the hues and tints we had never before seen—at the majesty of the shadows coming up so suddenly—at the stars one after another glistening deep in the water.

And then, breaking in so pleasantly on the stillness, the low sound of women's voices, and pretty Breton girls with crucifixes on their breasts and long rosaries from their waists, passed over the bridge, driving home the cattle from the pasture lands of Varades. They barely looked up as they went by—with only a passing glance at
Bow's night sketch of the river. When they left their cows, they went straight up the hill to the church, with the other villagers, for the evening salut.

The earnest music of the bell stole down the rock and across the water to a hut on the island, where through the open doorway there shone the red glare of a forge. The man lifted his cap, laid down the hammer on the anvil, and put on his coat to go up and answer it. And then came the organ!
CHAPTER XLVI.


"I don't fancy we're likely to go on to Ancenis to-night," said Two, as they came on to the bridge. "We've found an inn—such an inn; and the landlady's daughter has a face that Raphael—"

Bow packed up his things at once.

The man stopped us at the toll gate for sous. We had already paid, but he made us do so again. It was a new bridge, and possibly he thought it cheap for the view.

The first thing we saw was Bourouou in the inn kitchen turning omelettes, as if he had been at home there for a week, and astonishing the cook by a masterly vol au vent. He had guessed somehow we would go no further, and was down upon us the first train. The cook was the landlady herself, and her daughter was certainly singularly handsome.
"A little queen-like, perhaps," said Two. "Though I know a queen——."

We were surprised to find that we had dropped upon an important village, and of far greater interest than the town of Ancenis, and all by accident. If we had not taken the wrong turning we should have missed the brightest inn we had yet met, and the most picturesque spot on the river.

St. Florent saw the beginning and the end of the great Vendéan insurrection. In 1793, the inhabitants of La Vendée rose to a man against the Revolution, and declared themselves for the King, the priests and the nobles. It commenced at this little village on the 10th of March, and the first movement had for its chiefs two men of the people—Cathelineau, a voiturier, and Stofflet, a game-keeper. Then came Rochejacquelein and Bonchamp—Charette, Marigny, and the rest. For a time they had a vein of brilliant success. They took Thouars in May, Saumur in June, and followed up by driving the garrison out of Angers.

But the same month they went down to Nantes—were defeated, and lost Cathelineau. Thenceforth everything went against them. They had neither science nor organisation, and what guns they possessed, they had taken in battle. The army of Mayence, under Kleber, followed them, and in October routed them mortally. They fled
in confusion, and at night, eighty thousand people,—soldiers, old men, women, and children, found themselves once more at St. Florent, with no other alternative but to abandon La Vendée, and cross the Loire.

There were 4000 republican prisoners shut up in the church, and the Vendéans, to avenge their disaster at Cholet, were pointing their cannon upon it,—when Bonchamp, who was mortally wounded, begged for their lives with his dying breath.

The morning after our arrival we saw his tomb in the church. A work said to be one of the chefs d’œuvre of the sculptor David. It represents Bonchamp lifting himself in his agony to pronounce the words, "Grâce pour les prisonniers!"

There came with us for cicerone the scamp of the village. This was his reputation, even among his comrades, who were, however, not a little proud of him for one feat. The man at the bridge had gone to mass on
a Sunday—the scamp established himself at the toll-gate during his absence, and pocketed the sou on his own account. The village was horrified at the daring, but couldn’t help laughing.

But he was a wonderful boy. He told us all about the Vendéan war, took us to the pillar erected to Bonchamp, pointed out the île de la Meilleraye, where he died crossing the Loire, and hissed out the opprobrious name by which the Vendéans designated the republicans—les bleus, who in return called their enemies les brigands.

He had an eye for the beautiful as well, and a passionate love of his own country, this young vaurien. Noticing our intense admiration of the great view of country and river that spread out beneath, he said there was nothing like it anywhere else.

"Jolie? Je crois ben’. Nulle part, on ne voit pas des choses comme ça. Allez—!"

Our inn was just at the foot of the bridge, and basking in the sunshine of the peasants that kept crossing over it. We spent the long lazy morning chatting with the people of the neighbouring and opposite cottages, all of whose acquaintance we had made before breakfast.

They were all knitting, from the oldest grandmother to the baby in arms.

This was old Mère Bienpassée, whom Bow, after long persuasion, coaxed into a sitting.
She remembered '93, and spoke of the horror of the awful night when her countrymen crossed over the Loire. All her old cronies came tottering out to see the portrait taken. It had never been done before, and they were pleased with the gladness of children at a new toy.

Then the young girls—Emma, Hélène, Fantine—flew to put on their fête caps, and came back innocently and demurely, but fluttering in ribbons and earrings, and dainty aprons, with little pockets in them.

The whole village would have come down to be taken, but that we remembered it was something under forty miles to Nantes, and time to be starting. We liked the place, however, too well to leave it so soon. Even the old toll-keeper, who quarrelled with us about sous, made us come into his house on the bridge, and produced some excellent Medoc. So we decided upon not staying at Nantes, but coming back by train as soon as we should arrive, and go in for a day's fishing on the morrow.
With all St. Florent opening its old and young eyes, we unmoored the "Marie" for her last journey on the Loire.

Said Mère Bienpassée with shaking voice—"N'y a pas ici une fille si coquette!"

For the first time it was not "adieu," but "au revoir," as we pulled away.

We were past Ancenis in no time, and certainly did not regret the accident that led us to St. Florent instead, though it was a striking-looking place, built like an amphitheatre, and good views of the river from its big hills.

The valley of the Loire grew narrower for a little time, but soon opened out into a succession of beautiful lakes sprinkled with green islands.

One more sandbank, and then the last of our pleasant drifting luncheons taking us by the ruins of the great castle of Champtoceaux that belonged to Marguérite de Clisson, with the little two-arched pier at its foot, where the owner levied tolls on all passing vessels. Into the lake of Oudon with its superb panorama that made us fairly pull up at an island to enjoy it.

The long line of purple rocks that had followed nearly the whole way, were here at their biggest. They were not bare rocks, but wooded densely, and no two miles alike. On our right a forest island, that looked big enough to be
the mainland, but that we knew there were two such
islands and channels beyond, making the Loire two kilo-
mètres broad. At the end of the lake was a little white
cottage like Eily O'Connell's in the Colleen Bawn, and
above it a black wood in rich contrast.

We thought the island we were on was uninhabited, but
a man shot up from the bushes begging us not to throw
stones into the river and so impede the navigation. He
was in a pair of very old brown trousers with bright
patches of red at the knees, a huge straw hat, and great
wooden sabots, with hay for socks. We gave him a cigar,
and he at once offered us a sou. On our refusal to accept
the money, which he attributed to our thinking it was not
enough for the weed, he reluctantly pulled out another and
offered us two. Declining once more, he fancied we were
suspicious of the coin; and said rather indignantly,
"Dame, c'est bon argent!" We had some difficulty in
convincing him it was an offering of friendship, and that
we were not traders.

He was sitting down for a comfortable chat, and telling
some legend of a big château, which he called chotow,
belonging to the Comtesse de Bourdonnais, when a shrill
voice sang out to him, "Ah! paresseux, que fais-tu done?"
and his face told the story of a henpecked life, as he left
like an arrow to obey. He flattered us on our accent,
"Mais vous parlez français mieux que je ne parle Anglais,"
which, as he didn't know one word, was a waggish compliment.

We had a brilliant finish to Nantes of exactly twenty-one kilomètres, or thirteen miles without a single easy, and well under the hour and twenty minutes, but then the last four or five miles were at racing pace, and the "Marie" flew like the little beauty she was.

And so on the evening of the ninth day, we finished the 250 miles of the noblest of the French rivers.
CHAPTER XLVII.

BACK TO ST. FLORENT—THE FAMILY CHASSEUR—A DAY'S FISHING—MARILLAI.

On the way back to St. Florent, we saw a specimen of the native chasseur. Shaded as under an umbrella, by an enormous Panama, he was dressed in the coolest white, and had evidently walked on the cleanest roads, for there was not a stain upon him. He had the gun, and bag, and his pointer. But he also had his wife and child, a baby in its perambulator, and the nurse.

"La chasse en famille, c'est graceux," said the man who pointed him out.

Our fishing next day was a brilliant failure. We were out all the morning with boats and miles of nets, that had artful pockets for the fish to make losing hazards into, but they wouldn't play with us. So we gave it up, and spent the afternoon on the steps by the bridge, which was the chatty corner of St. Florent, and Emma, Hélène, and Fantine brought their knitting.

At the embouchure of a little river called l'Evre, flowing
into the Loire close to St. Florent, there was a charming village called Marillais. Near as it was to St. Florent, it looked as if it had never gone on with time, but stood still a thousand years ago, or from the century of Charlemagne himself, who built its church. It is hidden from the Loire, and the Evre is but a small stream. A little grey village, and poor huts with the church in the centre.

There is of course a legend.

One day Charlemagne went down Mont Glonne (the old name for St. Florent) to the borders of the lake. There, drawing his long sword, enriched with gold, silver, and diamonds, he struck the rock three times and cleft it in two. Then he flung his sword towards the water, saying, "Là où elle tombera, là sera bâtie l'église de Notre Dame!" And it fell in the lake a hundred paces from the rock, and a hundred paces from the Loire.

The historians, however, say that the church actually built by Charlemagne was in truth a royal edifice, a monument of vast proportions, and brilliant with every treasure of art. The Carlovingian kings adorned it with sacred vessels and precious ornaments. It had even a bell of solid gold, a hundred pounds in weight, which the fishermen found in the bed of the Loire in the eleventh century, hidden away no doubt in troublous times. But with the end of Charlemagne's reign came the Norman and other pirates,
and the church was sacked and burnt to the ground. Restored again, and again pillaged and destroyed. And when we passed by it was nothing more than the shell of an old barn, the only decoration being a few poor *ex voto* offerings of the sailors. The curé lived in a humble cottage, and was himself nailing up chests of *chapelets* which the villagers made for sale. He told us that where the church now stood and the village, was in the fourth century a lake adjoining the Loire—hence its pretty name, *Ecclesia Beatæ Maria de lacu*; or, *Notre Dame de Marillas*.

We stayed three whole days at St. Florent, and with sincere regret bid the little village and its friendly people good-bye.
CHAPTER XLVIII.


We were no way interested in Nantes, and, after one night, pulled through the city to get through the lock to the Erdre. Number Five was unfortunately obliged to leave us, to our great disappointment, for his society was as pleasant and cheery as his muscular exertions at the oar were invaluable. Coxswain once more took his old place, and we set out on our northward journey, by the Breton Canal to Dinan and St. Malo.

We had to hold our noses and smoke fiercely while buried in the black pit of the most offensive lock upon record. Barely large enough for the boat, and was evidently the reservoir for the universal sewage of Nantes. Through the iron gratings at the top the crowd swarmed on each other’s shoulders, like so many animals at the Zoological Gardens, to watch us go through. We lost no time in flying from it, express speed, but in half an hour
were in as pretty and wild a lake as if no town were within a hundred miles. We had no notion of coming to anything so delightful. After one small village that was the last link of Nantes, the Erdre formed itself into a chain of lakes that were very beautiful and strangely solitary.

Towards evening (for we started late) we found ourselves, after fifteen miles, at the lock de Quilheix, when we left the Erdre, which branched off to Nort, and entered on the canal de Nantes or Brest.
It was a sudden, startling change from the mighty Loire to the little canal. In the wildest and loneliest parts of the big river there was always something to break the silence, if only in the movement and noise of the water. But here the expression of the country was that of the most profound repose, and the water as still and unrippling as if it had gone to sleep for ever. The reflections of the trees were motionless as if they had been painted, and not a breath stirred a leaf of the solemn poplars. Mère Bretonne, in her quaint cap, stood on the lock gates petrified at this strange boat, with its long arms, stretching across from bank to bank. There was something for her to talk over long and earnestly that night, over the pot au feu in her little chaumière. "Jamais, mon Dieu, jamais!" the solitary expression of her half uttered thoughts, in bewilderment of something she had never before dreamt of.

For now we were in the heart of Brittany, and our route far from the ken of guide books or tourists.

Through the trees there was glimpse of the Château de la Gâcherie, where Marguerite de Navarre, sister to Francis I., wrote her romances—and not far from it another of Blue Beard's Castles—that where the eighty skeletons were discovered. But this was below, on the river we were leaving. We rose through the lock, above the low rocky hills and woods of the Erdre lakes, and shot into the pastoral quiet of a new country.
We had it all to ourselves, and beyond the people at the locks, met not a soul to speak to. The villages seemed to lie far inland.

No more sandbanks, so we rowed on after dusk, mounting higher and higher, till we must have been a long way above the level of the Loire.

But there was no moon, and it grew so dark, that coming at last within sound of a village, we stopped to buy a lantern.

It was Sunday evening—and we heard some peasants across the fields singing a comic song. This was the burden.

There was nothing comic in the air. It was very plaintive and beautiful.

\[ Quasi allegro. \]

\[ \text{Bah! bah! bah! laissez moi passer J'ai deux filles à marier.} \]

I never yet heard a Breton song of any kind, that had not lurking in it the stamp of sadness. Though far inferior in beauty and dignity to the songs of Ireland, and altogether lacking their genius—they have one thing in common with them. They reflect as in a mirror the cachet de tristesse that is in the character of the Celtic race; and gives to the music so mysterious a charm.
Pradère says of the Breton ballads:

"En harmonie avec les landes incultes et le ciel gris de leur pays, ils reflètent la mélancolie, mélancolie naïve et douce, qui vous charme souvent plus que les élans d'une joie insensée"—and again—"ils révèlent les aventures privées d'un peuple, ses pensées habituelles . . . . . . . . : ce sont comme des mémoires particuliers au moyen desquels les nations racontent leur âme."

Coxswain returned with a monster lantern, which Bow and Two so ingeniously rigged up that the moment we started, it fell overboard with a great splash.

A glorious opportunity for Gyp, who thought we planned the surprise as a polite attention for him—but who was deeply offended, and would not be gracious for a long time, because we were fortunate enough to seize him in the act of taking his header.

The darkness was greater than ever, and it was ticklish work through the next lock. We had to borrow a candle to indicate our position in the depths—for we could only hear, not see the water rushing in above us.

It was getting late too, though we were resolved to row on all night so as to reach Blain. But at last it grew so black, that Coxswain was unable any longer to distinguish Bow and Gyp, and could only see half way up the boat.

All of a sudden there was a crash and shiver!

Lighting the candle, we got on shore, and found we had
run into the stone wall of a lock, barely above the level of the water.

It was lucky we had been going slowly—for anything like pace would probably have smashed the boat to atoms.

It was quite bad enough as it was. The bows stove in—and filling rapidly.

We hauled her on the bank, and consulted round the candle. There was a little despondency.

"Looks as if it was all up," said one,—"case of inquiring for the nearest railway, and sending the boat on by barge!"

"Not a bit of it," said another. "We'll mend her all right enough to-morrow. The thing seems to be—what are we to do now?"

Should we strike across country till we stumbled on a house? and would the candle last long enough?

We might have had to sleep on the bank, but that a man appeared from the lock house—who didn't in the least grumble about getting out of bed, but was very civil and obliging. He told us we were at the lock La Remaudais, and only five miles from Blain. There was, however, a small village, La Chevaleraie, not more than a mile through the meadows, and he would gladly show us the way.

When we came to it, the houses seemed to be all among
trees. Stopped at the door of an auberge, and entered a low room very dimly lighted.

Coxswain very soon made himself at home in the kitchen department, and never did we relish a dinner at the "Trois Frères" more than the crisp country bacon and fresh eggs that were in no time steaming on the table.

A few villagers were still up—all wearing low-crowned hats—sipping white wine, and discussing politics with the landlord. They never once put the glass to their lips, without trinque-ing with the host and pledging one another.

There was a fierce Republican among them—the only one by the way we met away from the towns, and an unmitigated bore.

He stayed when the rest had gone, and fastened on to us, with a view of making converts to his doctrines. A hulking red-bearded ruffian, and no bad specimen of his Communist brethren. He scouted all religion, except "Ce qu'on trouve dans la liberté du peuple." A really religious man was "celui qui savait remplir une fonction!"

We asked what that was?

"C'est la chose publique!"

And that—

"On ne tremble pas, messieurs! Mais si vous ne savez pas la chose publique——?"

And he drowned his contempt for our ignorance in abundant liquor.
We found afterwards he was an idle drunkard, and the only disreputable subject in the place, doing nothing, but living upon the host, who was his brother-in-law. He was in strange contrast with the mass of Bretons, who are not only consistent but enthusiastic Catholics, and Royalist to the backbone. He possessed a certain fluency, which appeared to please him greatly, though it didn’t seem to have much influence on the others.

We were not sorry to shake him off, and toss up for the spare bed and the mattresses on the floor.
CHAPTER XLIX.


These Bretons are early people, and the whole village was astir by four. It was impossible to sleep in the face of the fresh sweet breath that followed the sun in through the lattice, and we did at last get up at five.

Our inn was equally the shop of the place. Sold bacon and boots and mustard, whipcord and hats.

It was a pretty cluster of cottages, and must have been built originally on the edge of a forest, for bits of wood still peeped between the houses, and the one road came out from trees to go through the village, and so left it again.

The church was a large and even stately building, and there was a handsome statue to Notre Dame de Bonnes Nouvelles, enshrined in masses of flowers, which the village girls brought in whilst we were there. By the water font in the doorway were one or two skulls, no doubt as a
"Memento Mori," or "Brother, we must die," to the passers by. The younger women, apparently the unmarried, wore, as we had seen at St. Florent, crucifixes on their breasts and long rosaries from the waist. Only here it was a general custom, and we found it in the quiet meadows, where the girls spent their day, knitting and minding the cows.

These girls were very pretty, and singularly modest. They would pass by without lifting their eyes and never once look round, and yet the sacristan told us we were the first foreigners seen in that part of the country.

The bore of the red beard was lying in wait for us at breakfast, with radical articles in a journal a week old.

"Je vais lire, messieurs, pour vous amuser!"

It made us ask for the bill at once. Sixteen shillings only for the five—dinner, beds, breakfast, coffee and fruit. We thought of Meurice, where the sum would have vanished in a bottle of wine.

The village carpenter, who was also the choir, came with us to the boat. But Bow had already bound up her wounds with tarred rope and matting, and though her poor nose was sadly disfigured and something of the old grace gone, she was water-tight enough to launch once again.

The second day on the canal was but a repetition of the former, save that the country grew wilder and more
lonely. The lock houses, which we now met about every two miles, were very pretty and picturesque, and the verandahs covered with grapes. We bought a huge basketful for half a franc. There seemed to be a custom in the country to let you eat on the wayside as much as you liked for nothing, but a penalty for pocketing any.

We came to an old castle, of which no mention was made in "Murray," or even the French guide books—the Château de Blain. Indeed all the books were now silent about the route we were following, and the auberges had none of the signs that indicated the tracks of even an occasional wanderer.

It was a mass of ruins, but must have been once a noble palace. It was one of the most striking things we had seen, and the concièrge who opened the rusty doors for us, said there had been formerly nine towers, where now there was but one.

The stately terraces and pleasaunce, moat and long avenues, still existed, but the interior was all but crumbling. Salons nearly a hundred feet long, broad in proportion, and lofty windows in recesses where the walls were five or six feet thick. And in the tower a winding staircase led to bright octagonal rooms one above the other, with glorious views over the country. But it was dangerous work, stepping on the rotten woodwork, with chasms opening some 90 feet below.
In the cellars we stumbled over a mouldy cannon-ball, which looked as if it had been the last occupant of the place.

So big and deserted was the château that Stroke was locked in without knowing it when all the rest had gone, and had to sing out from an upper window for a good twenty minutes before he was heard and let out.
It was all so old that there was nothing more for the ivy to do; but inside the church, of which the walls only were standing, big trees had long grown over the site of the altar and down the aisles, and clustered round the open steps of a vault which was in the centre.

We lunched at the end of the moat, which was in a line with the pleasaunce and led up to the castle.

Rushes and water-lilies in abundance; and some people came down from the modern château hard by, leaning over the terrace wall and chatting with us.

It was a bright little spot, with an old bridge and a diminutive bay off the canal, where the first barges we had met lay at anchor. They, too, were at luncheon, and the sailors wore red caps and smoked Dutch pipes, and brought up the children from the cabin to look at ce drôle de petit vaisseau.

Two little boys who were of the party from the château, hearing of the loss of our lantern, ran off at once to the village to get us another; and here, as everywhere through Brittany, these people were full of the most gentle courtesy and kindness. A sedate little lady of about eight or nine years went with us to the bridge, where we might meet the lantern half way; for it was after four, and thirty miles to the station we hoped to reach.

We went on again through the pleasant evening sunset and twilight, nothing much in the way of scenery, but
principally through heavy trees and by miles of soft grassy banks. There were bits now and then absolutely beautiful—miniature of course, and like cabinet pictures of spots

we had met on the Seine; grotto recesses where flowers blossomed over the water, and wild birds built their nests.

To many it might have been monotonous after the swing and pace of the Loire; but for my own part, from the first to the last stroke of the cruise, the interest went on increasing, no matter where we were; and two months more of such wandering would have been gladly welcome.
Condition was beginning to tell, and the health that one rarely knows without such steady and continuous exercise, and which made you find poetry in the bricks of a lime-kiln. And after all, the very tranquillity of the little stream and its unknown villages was not an unpleasing change from the rush of the great rivers and their big cities.
CHAPTER L.

NIGHT AGAIN—WE PASS A CHÂTEAU TO WHICH, WITHOUT KNOWING IT, WE HAVE A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION—AND ALL ARE ‘PAINT WITH HUNGER’—WE PUSH ON—ROUET—OUR ADVENTURES—THE LITTLE BRETONNE WHO WOULDN’T MAKE FRIENDS—CHEERY LANDLORD.

After passing the lock at Welneuf, beyond which there was none other for fifteen miles, some of the crew got out and towed with a long rope. The river too grew broader and the banks higher; but it was again so dark that we in the boat lost sight of those on the bank, and could only distinguish them by their voices.

We were remarking how painfully hungry we all felt, when we passed a large château close to the bank, lights glancing from window to window, and the big bell ringing for supper. It looked very tempting, and the more so as we hadn’t the mildest notion of our whereabouts, didn’t know of any village near, and only guessed that we must be some sixteen or twenty miles from Redon.

Said Stroke, “I’ve half a mind to go up to the gates, wind the old horn, and claim hospitality till the morrow for four benighted travellers.”
I think we should have done so, but that some one fancied he saw a light a long way ahead, and so we tugged on, not without looking back and fondly pondering what there would have been for supper, and the stately minuet that Bow and Two might have led in the great hall. Only the next day Stroke, learning the name of this château and turning over his papers, found among them a letter of introduction to the owner, and in such terms that a warm welcome would have extended for probably many days. The light was a very long way ahead, and only a man with a lantern, whom we overtook and passed, going home to his cottage.

He told us of a village not far from the next bridge we should come to, and where we accordingly landed, for Two was so faint with hunger that it might have been serious not to have stopped.

It was some way inland from the bridge, and all the lights in the village were out when we entered it. Groping our way we stumbled against a door and knocked for admittance.

"Mais qu'est-ce qu'il y a donc à cette heure-ci, eh?"

A woman's voice some way inside the room.

"Nous avons monté la Seine, quarante-cinq minuits dans l'eau," began Bow.

"Les gens comme il faut ne racontent pas des histoires comme ça dans la nuit. Allez! chantez ailleurs!"
The inflection of her voice didn't sound promising; but we were in the dark and couldn't see any other house.

We thought of the teapot!—only possibly she mightn't lend us one.

Three hadn't even his paper and comb.

We sat down on the steps, and Two began a little song—a pretty little thing we thought.

The woman threw up the window and called for the gendarme.

We explained that we were looking for the inn.

Then scrutinizing us by a lantern, she was satisfied we were not mauvais sujets, and told us there was one en face.

We found it, raised the latch, and went in. A young and very pretty Breton girl was sitting in the far corner spinning by a rushlight. She didn't seem very pleased to see us at first, and it made us think that our appearance was not as striking as we could have wished. All being dressed alike was conspicuous to begin with, and naturally drew attention. Boating garments do not last for ever, and ours, losing the certain amount of gay dash they one time possessed, through rain, sun, and playful blanchisseuses, were fast subsiding into the dotage of faded gentility.

"But we've all faded together," said Bow, with his artist eye to uniformity.

The little maid called her father—a cheery old peasant as we ever met, and who welcomed us heartily. The household
had long gone to bed, and the fires were out. But he soon set the logs crackling and blazing on the big hearth, and the light shone upon a dark oak ceiling with heavy rafters, right through which an oak staircase wound to the upper rooms. As the blaze crept up it went round the room and flashed off dozens of bright copper pans as off so many mirrors. Then the maids came down and set the kettle singing. The landlord took down a fitch of bacon from the ceiling, and the gay rashers went in for a chorus with the kettle.

And all the time the little maid who wouldn't make friends sat by the rushlight still spinning, till she saw Bow slily, and fancying he was unnoticed, trying to sketch her face. Then the first smile stole from under her long eyelashes, and she suggested to her father that perhaps ces messieurs would like a rognon and some pommes de terre frites.

Presently three old men, in lower crowned hats than ever—they were rapidly getting down to nothing but brim—dropped in, wondering no doubt to see lights about at so late an hour, and to find out what was going on.

If they were admirers of honest appetites, they never had such a treat in their lives. They each had their glass and pipe, and trinqué'd with the landlord—and then heartily, after the kindly fashion of the country, with us.

We called for some better wine.
"Ah!" said the landlord, "if you have anything better than this, you must pay for it!"

Well, we didn't mind a little extravagance, for once in a way.

"Mais, je vous dis que ça coûte cher—comprennez-vous?—ça coûte cher!"

He stood at the door a moment, waiting to see if we had really made up our minds, and finding we were resolved, lit his lantern, and went out to the cellar.

A cold gust of wind came through the door, as he returned with two bottles carefully under each arm. Placed them on the table as if they had been babies.

"Ça, c'est un franc!"—pointing to one, then with graver voice, "l'autre, c'est beaucoup plus cher—pour celui-ci, faut payer trente sous!"

And we had expected—forgetting we were in the heart of the wine country—at least ten or twelve francs—but repressed our satisfaction at finding it only so many pence, and the wine excellent of its kind.

But it was getting late, and the little maid curtseying prettily, and bidding us "Bonne nuit, et Dieu vous garde, messieurs," retired with the others.

We, however, sate long into the night, smoking and trinqué-ing with the landlord and the three old men, little thinking it was the last time we should be up at "five in the morning, old fellow" to pull on in the "Marie!"
CHAPTER LI.

THE CHURCH—MARKET—WE ARE ASKED FOR OUR PASSPORTS—WHAT TWO SHewed—THE CRISP, BRIGHT MORNING—THE TWO FIDDLERS—ABOUT BRETON WEDDINGS—REDON—CRUISE COMES TO AN END—LEGEND OF REDON—DINAN—GYP Wonders WHY WE SAY GOOD-BYE—GYP THINKING IT ALL OVER.

Again the village woke us at sunrise. It was a still brighter place than La Chevaleraie, and there was a market going on. We were opposite the church. There was a Calvary outside, and again skulls by the water font for village meditation. A soft silver mist was giving way to a warm sun, and the people were already thronging out from the church. The women’s caps were different here, flatter and much prettier, many of them bound with black ribbon, which hung down over the shoulders.
The cattle seemed to wait quite naturally outside the church, till the girls came out from mass to drive them to the pastures.

We were introduced to the chief legal authority and representative of the Government. He was dressed in a blue blouse and wore sabots, and was also the gendarme who was to have taken us up.

He asked solemnly for our passports, but not understanding a word of English, was perfectly satisfied with a form of a writ of certiorari, which Two (law student of the Temple) happened to have about him.

What a crisp joyous morning was this, the last—though we little guessed it at the time—of our cruise. There was all the sweet new life of the day just born—that strange fragrance and freshness that never lingers after sunrise, and even at six o'clock is all gone.

Ah! yes, old Bow, we saw you through the open lattice, giving the portrait you sketched the night before by the spinning rushlight, to Marie, the landlord's daughter, and softening the little face with the sweetest of smiles.

And we all went in to breakfast together, sitting at the wooden tables with the brown-faced Breton girls—the cows still waiting for them outside.

What white teeth they had, and laughing voices; and how they enjoyed the bread and milk!
Then two fiddlers, young peasants, and dressed very gaily, looked in. They were going to a wedding, and as they stood at the door, dashed off little fugitive bits of music, that sent a flutter through the room, and made more than one small foot restless with longing to dance.

Another pleasant bill—only twenty-two francs for us all, including even the extravagance of the rare old wine, comprenez-vous?—and the fiddlers departing, we bid Marie and the rest good-bye, and went with them.

Up the quiet country road, and through the fields where the dew still glittered and was all about—one fiddle going like mad, and making the birds wild with delight, while the other took it in turn to talk and tell us of the wedding.

That very day, at Redon, we saw a marriage procession come up the street, the fiddler at the head playing an old Breton tune with a quaint joyous rhythm, that set you dancing in spite of yourself. Next a woman carrying a three-cornered broom, with a lighted candle on each corner. Then the bride and bridegroom, followed in couples by some forty or fifty relatives and guests. One shouldered a chair, another a jug and basin, one a small table, and so on with every conceivable article of furniture that was possible to carry with a disengaged arm. The costumes were exceedingly pretty, with plenty of red and
blue colour in the women's dresses, and dainty kerchiefs round the neck.

Among them was the *Bazvalun*.

In some parts of Brittany no marriages are made without the intervention of this most important personage. He is either a beggar, or (more frequently) a tailor. His name is derived from *Baz* (a little stick), and *balan* (broom), which plant he carries with him in his match-making enterprises, as the ancient symbol of address.

He meets, as if by accident, the maiden, learns that she is not indifferent to the *jeune paysan* who is in love with her, and at once proceeds to the cottage of the girl's parents to make a formal proposal in his character of deputy.

Should he hear on his way the cry of a turtle dove, he accepts it as a good augury that his mission will be successful. On the other hand, if it be a crow or magpie, he is as likely as not to turn back and yield to the influence of the ill omen.

He arrives at the door, and if Madame puts the pot on the fire in the ordinary way, he knows he will be welcome. But if she turns her back in so doing, or delays in asking him to enter, he understands there is no good trying, and that he may as well retrace his steps.

If favourably received, he is treated as an honoured
guest, and the table is covered at once with pancakes, milk, butter and white bread, *pour lui faire fête*.

Drawing the mother aside, he settles the whole affair in very few words, the respective fathers meet, tap hands, and from that moment the contract is ratified, though in certain parts the future bridegroom is by custom allowed a few days, to fully make up his mind. Should he feel disposed to change, he comes to the cottage when all are assembled, takes up a log of wood, and lays it down crosswise upon the hearth. This, done in perfect silence, is held to declare that he renounces the intended alliance.

But in these contracts no one can be found more loyal than a Breton peasant.

A curious spectacle occurs on the day of the wedding. Early in the morning the *filles d'honneur* come to the bride's house to conduct her to the church. The *fiancé* waits outside, attended by his *garçon d'honneur*, the *Bazvalan*.

The *Bazvalan* approaches the door and improvises a duo with another singer who is inside, and belongs to the house, and who is called the *Breutaer*, or for the time being, guardian *poétique* of the *fiancée*.

The *Bazvalan* commences:

"*Au nom du Tout-Puissant le Père,*
*Au nom du Fils, du Saint Esprit,*
*Que sous ce toit tout soit prospère,*
*Et plus gai qu'en mon cœur contrit!*"
The Breutaer asks the cause of his sorrow?

"J'avais une colombe blanche,
J'avais un blanc petit pigeon,
Tous deux volaient, de branche en branche,
Jusqu'au faite de mon donjon:
Mais comme un coup de vent d'automne,
S'est abattu là, l'épervier,
Et ma colombe si mignonne
Ne revient plus au colombier."

The duet goes on for a long time, the colombe blanche being the symbol of the bride, whom he is supposed to have lost and seeks. The Breutaer feigning not to know where she is, till in the end, subdued by the ardour and the skill of the Bazvalan, he gives in.

**Le Breutaer (from within).**

"Seigneur Dieu! . . . . . qu'il a donc de ruse,
Viens, mon ami, vite, suis moi:
Ta colombe est ici recluse,
Elle t'attend tout en émoi,
Dans une cage, bien gardée,
Sous des barreaux d'or et d'argent,
Elle est là, joyeuse et parée
Belle à ravir, elle t'attend !"

The above was half told and shown to me by a publisher from whose shop in Redon we saw the wedding march go by. The work was by Pradère, one of the most delightful ever written, and called "La Bretagne Poétique." The cérémonies des noces, with their old quaint customs, are so deeply interesting, that I am unwilling to quote at
greater length, for fear of doing the author injustice, in this necessarily discursive manner.

But one word more to conclude, and we’re off to the boat.

When the wedding is over, and the bride is about to depart, the Bazvalan repeats in common with all the guests the De Profundis, for the souls of those who have died in the house. And then, in a few touching words, reminds the fiancée of all the past tenderness her parents have lavished on her from childhood, and the grief they now feel in parting with her for ever.

Recalling, says the author, the beautiful lines which Victor Hugo addressed to his eldest daughter, sa fille chérie, on her marriage:

"Aime celui qui t’aime, et sois heureuse en lui.  
Adieu, sois son trésor, à toi qui fus la nôtre!  
Va, mon enfant chéri, d’une famille à l’autre,  
Emporte le bonheur, et laisse-nous ennu!  
Ici l’on te retient, là-bas on te désire.  
Fille, épouse, ange, enfant, fais ton double devoir:  
Donne-nous un regret, donne-nous un espoir;  
Sors avec une larme, entre avec un sourire."

In other parts of Brittany, the bride on the morning of the wedding hides herself in the house, or more frequently in the fields and in the woods, and the bridegroom and his friends have to seek her for perhaps many hours.
The ceremony over, there is a steeple-chase across country from the church to the home—all the guests taking part—a red ribbon for the first, white for the second, and so on.

It would have been fun to have gone with our two fiddlers, if only for this last excitement; but bidding them good bye and wishing them a joyous festival, we took our places and sent the "Marie" on her last fifteen or twenty miles.

We had fully intended traversing the entire length of the canals, which would have been only 184 kilomètres more (115 miles) to Dinan, and thence swing down the beautiful Rance, in a short afternoon, to St. Malo.

But reaching Redon about midday and looking at the map, Bow and Three found they would not have sufficient time to complete the distance, and were anxious to get back to England. Stroke and Two might have gone on alone; but it would have been dreary work without two such genial, hearty companions, and all the interest of our tour would be gone, in breaking up a crew that had been so long together.

So the last wondering crowd followed our little vessel as we lifted her from the water, and carried her through the streets of Redon, to the railway for St. Malo.

Then we drew lots for the flag, and it fell second draw to Stroke.
We spent a few hours in the town, waiting for the train to take us on to Rennes. It is an interesting old place, and has a curious legend. More than 1000 years ago it consisted only of a few straggling huts, while near it stood the large and populous town of Thieux. And one night a little child, almost naked, and shivering in the cold, was seen on the banks of the river, seeking for shelter and a little charity. The laveuses of Rieux turned him away, and he wandered on until he came to Redon, where he was kindly received. Now this little child, says the legend, was Our Lord; and He blessed Redon and its kindly inhabitants, and the town grew and prospered, while Rieux fell away and dwindled to insignificance.

In the evening we went on to Rennes, and so northwards, finding out at every step the loss of the old charm of our travelling.

Pointing from the window of a stifling railway carriage, "See that bit of the river—there—under those great cliffs! Well, we should have been shooting by them about to-morrow evening. And that pretty white village with vine clusters! What a place to come to anchor for the night!"

Gyp and Stroke entered the last "log" under one of the gateways of Dinan.

The same may be said of this place as of Boulogne—a delightful old town, if none but French lived in it. In
all Brittany—France itself with few exceptions—there is nothing more picturesque. But it wants only the grace and charm of its own people, and not the disfigurement of a foreign colony.

We hired a carriage for the pleasant drive to St. Servan, and caught regretful glimpses of the Ranee, down which we would have given so much to be flying, on the swift sea tide that sweeps so fiercely round the rocks of St. Malo.

So ended our cruise.

I think we regretted few things more than parting with Gyp, when we four stood on the last platform together, and he looked up with wistful eyes, wondering why we were bidding each other good-bye.

Though young, he had been greatly aged by the tour, and no wonder. The sense of responsibility that weighed upon him, in constantly looking after and keeping us together, would have crushed any other dog. Never a morning but he flew from bed to bed to see we were all there. The same the last thing at night. Did two of the crew happen to walk only a few hundred yards ahead of the others, it bewildered his loyalty and made him wretched till he had collected the four like a flock of sheep. His beauty, gentleness, and pretty tricks made him a pet everywhere. No little dog ever travelled so far before in an outrigger—certainly never one for so long a time
on the keel. He was proud of it, as you could see in his manner to other dogs.

He is sitting now with his paws on the fender, looking into the fire, where he sees pictures of the far away rivers, of tiny Norman maidens with their white caps and little wooden shoes—Moustache, Tarapatapoum—little Florence . . . . and so nods his head dozing, to dream over again our autumn holiday in the "Marie!"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kilometres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hâvre to Quillebœuf</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quillebœuf to Villequier</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villequier to Caudebec</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caudebec to Dhuclair</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhuclair to Rouen</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhuise-Seine Fluviale.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rouen to Elbœuf</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elbœuf to Andelys</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andelys to Vernon</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernon to Mautes</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mautes to Poissy</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poissy to Pecq</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pecq to Asnières</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asnières to Paris</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haute-Seine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris to Junction of the Marne</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marne to Corbeil</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbeil to Melun</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melun to St. Mamês</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total of Seine—453 Kilomètres = 283 English miles.

Eight locks on the Basse-Seine, the first (Martot) 15½ miles above Rouen.
Ten locks on the Haute-Seine.
From St. Mamês, by the Canal du Loing, and Canal
d'Orléans (Combleux) 90 English miles.
### TABLE OF DISTANCES.

#### THE LOIRE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kilometres</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orleans (Combleux)</td>
<td>to Beaugency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaugency</td>
<td>to Blois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blois</td>
<td>to Amboise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amboise</td>
<td>to Tours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tours</td>
<td>to Langeais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langeais</td>
<td>to Saumur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saumur (8 kilomètres on the Maine)</td>
<td>to Angers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angers (do. do. do.)</td>
<td>to St. Florent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Florent</td>
<td>to Nantes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Windings of the channel through the sand islands, estimated by the pilots at one-fourth additional of the distance | **85** |
| Total of Loire—427 Kilomètres = 266½ English miles | **427** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kilometres</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nantes</td>
<td>to Redon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60 English miles.

#### THE END.