

NORMANDY

GORDON HOME*

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LIST OF LINE ILLUSTRATIONS

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OUISTREHAM

LIST OF LINE ILLUSTRATIONS

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CHAPTER I

Some Features of Normandy

Very large ants, magpies in every meadow, and coffee-cups without handles, but of great girth, are some of the objects that soon become familiar to strangers who wander in that part of France which was at one time as much part of England as any of the counties of this island. The ants and the coffee-cups certainly give one a sense of being in a foreign land, but when one wanders through the fertile country among the thatched villages and farms that so forcibly remind one of Devonshire, one feels a friendliness in the landscapes that scarcely requires the stimulus of the kindly attitude of the peasants towards *les anglais*.

If one were to change the dark blue smock and the peculiar peaked hat of the country folk of Normandy for the less distinctive clothes of the English peasant, in a very large number of cases the Frenchmen would pass as English. The Norman farmer so often has features strongly typical of the southern counties of England, that it is surprising that with his wife and his daughters there should be so little resemblance. Perhaps this is because the French women dress their hair in such a different manner to those on the northern side of the Channel, and they certainly, taken as a whole, dress with better effect than their English neighbours; or it may be that the similar ideas prevailing among the men as to how much of the face should be shaved have given the stronger sex an artificial resemblance.

In the towns there is little to suggest in any degree that the mediaeval kings of England ruled this large portion of France, and at Mont St Michel the only English objects besides the ebb and flow of tourists are the two great iron *michelettes* captured by the French in 1433. Everyone who comes to the wonderful rock is informed that these two guns are English; but as they have been there for nearly five hundred years, no one feels much shame at seeing them in captivity, and only a very highly specialised antiquary would be able to recognise any British features in them. Everyone, however, who visits Normandy from England with any enthusiasm, is familiar with the essential features of Norman and early pointed architecture, and it is thus with distinct pleasure that the churches are often found to be strikingly similar to some of the finest examples of the earlier periods in England.

When we remember that the Norman masons and master-builders had been improving the crude Saxon architecture in England even before the Conquest, and that, during the reigns of the Norman kings, "Frenchmen," as the Saxons called them, were working on churches and castles in every part of our island, it is no matter for surprise to find that buildings belonging to the eleventh, twelfth, and even the thirteenth century, besides being of similar general design, are often covered with precisely the same patterns of ornament. When the period of Decorated Gothic began to prevail towards the end of the thirteenth century, the styles on each side of the Channel gradually diverged, so that after that time the English periods do not agree with those of Normandy. There is also, even in the churches that most resemble English structures, a strangeness that assails one unless familiarity has taken the edge off one's perceptions. Though not the case with all the fine churches and cathedrals of Normandy, yet with an unpleasantly large proportion—unfortunately including the magnificent Church of St Ouen at Rouen—there is beyond the gaudy tinsel that crowds the altars, an untidiness that detracts from the sense of reverence that stately Norman or Gothic does not fail to inspire. In the north transept of St Ouen, some of the walls and pillars have at various times been made to bear large printed notices which have been pasted down, and when out of date they have been only roughly torn off, leaving fragments that soon become discoloured and seriously mar the dignified antiquity of the stone-work. But beyond this, one finds that the great black stands for candles that burn beside the altars are generally streaked with the wax that has guttered from a dozen flames, and that even the floor is covered with lumps of wax—the countless stains of only partially scraped-up gutterings of past offerings. There is also that peculiarly unpleasant smell so often given out by the burning wax that greets one on entering the cool twilight of the building. The worn and tattered appearance of the rush-seated chairs in the churches is easily explained when one sees the almost constant use to which they are put. In the morning, or even as late as six in the evening, one finds classes of boys or girls being catechised and instructed by priests and nuns. The visitor on pushing open the swing door of an entrance will frequently be met by a monotonous voice that echoes through the apparently empty church. As he slowly takes his way along an aisle, the voice will cease, and suddenly break out in a simple but loudly sung Gregorian air, soon joined by a score or more of childish voices; then, as the stranger comes abreast of a side chapel, he causes a grave distraction among the rows of round, closely cropped heads. The rather nasal voice from the sallow figure in the cassock rises higher, and as the echoing footsteps of the person who does nothing but stare about him become more and more distant, the sing-song tune grows in volume once more, and the rows of little French boys are again in the way of becoming good Catholics. In another side chapel the confessional box bears a large white card on which is printed in bold letters, "M. le Cure." He is on duty at the present time, for, from behind the curtained lattices, the stranger hears a soft mumble of words, and he is constrained to move silently towards the patch of blazing whiteness that betokens the free air and sunshine without. The cheerful clatter of the traffic on the cobbles is

typical of all the towns of Normandy, as it is of the whole republic, but Caen has reduced this form of noise by exchanging its omnibuses, that always suggested trams that had left the rails, for swift electric trams that only disturb the streets by their gongs. In Rouen, the electric cars, which the Britisher rejoices to discover were made in England—the driver being obliged to read the positions of his levers in English—are a huge boon to everyone who goes sight-seeing in that city. Being swept along in a smoothly running car is certainly preferable to jolting one's way over the uneven paving on a bicycle, but it is only in the largest towns that one has such a choice.

Although the only road that is depicted in this book is as straight as any built by the Romans and is bordered by poplars, it is only one type of the great *routes nationales* that connect the larger towns. In the hilly parts of Normandy the poplar bordered roads entirely disappear, and however straight the engineers may have tried to make their ways, they have been forced to give them a zig-zag on the steep slopes that breaks up the monotony of the great perspectives so often to be seen stretching away for great distances in front and behind. It must not be imagined that Normandy is without the usual winding country road where every bend has beyond it some possibilities in the way of fresh views. An examination of a good road map of the country will show that although the straight roads are numerous, there are others that wind and twist almost as much as the average English turnpike. As a rule, the *route nationale* is about the same width as most main roads, but it has on either side an equal space of grass. This is frequently scraped off by the cantoniers, and the grass is placed in great piles ready for removal. When these have been cleared away the thoroughfare is of enormous width, and in case of need, regiments could march in the centre with artillery on one side, and a supply train on the other, without impeding one another.

Level crossings for railways are more frequent than bridges. The gates are generally controlled by women in the family sort of fashion that one sees at the lodge of an English park where a right-of-way exists, and yet accidents do not seem to happen.

The railways of Normandy are those of the *Chemin de Fer de l'Ouest*, and one soon becomes familiar with the very low platforms of the stations that are raised scarcely above the rails. The porters wear blue smocks and trousers of the same material, secured at the waist by a belt of perpendicular red and black stripes. The railway carriages have always two foot-boards, and the doors besides the usual handles have a second one half-way down the panels presumably for additional security. It is really in the nature of a bolt that turns on a pivot and falls into a bracket. On the doors, the class of the carriages is always marked in heavy Roman numerals. The third-class compartments have windows only in the doors, are innocent of any form of cushions and are generally only divided half-way up. The second and first-class compartments are always much better and will bear comparison with those of the best English railways, whereas the usual

third-class compartment is of that primitive type abandoned twenty or more years ago, north of the Channel. The locomotives are usually dirty and black with outside cylinders, and great drum-shaped steam-domes. They seem to do the work that is required of them efficiently, although if one is travelling in a third-class compartment the top speed seems extraordinarily slow. The railway officials handle bicycles with wonderful care, and this is perhaps remarkable when we realize that French railways carry them any distance simply charging a penny for registration.

The hotels of Normandy are not what they were twenty years ago. Improvements in sanitation have brought about most welcome changes, so that one can enter the courtyard of most hotels without being met by the aggressive odours that formerly jostled one another for space. When you realize the very large number of English folk who annually pass from town to town in Normandy it may perhaps be wondered why the proprietors of hotels do not take the trouble to prepare a room that will answer to the drawing-room of an English hotel. After dinner in France, a lady has absolutely no choice between a possible seat in the courtyard and her bedroom, for the estaminet generally contains a group of noisy Frenchmen, and even if it is vacant the room partakes too much of the character of a bar-parlour to be suitable for ladies. Except in the large hotels in Rouen I have only found one which boasts of any sort of room besides the estaminet; it was the Hotel des Trois Marie at Argentan. When this defect has been remedied, I can imagine that English people will tour in Normandy more than they do even at the present time. The small washing basin and jug that apologetically appears upon the bedroom washstand has still an almost universal sway, and it is not sufficiently odd to excuse itself on the score of picturesqueness. Under that heading come the tiled floors in the bedrooms, the square and mountainous eiderdowns that recline upon the beds, and the matches that take several seconds to ignite and leave a sulphurous odour that does not dissipate itself for several minutes.

CHAPTER II

By the Banks of the Seine

If you come to Normandy from Southampton, France is entered at the mouth of the Seine and you are at once introduced to some of the loveliest scenery that Normandy possesses. The headland outside Havre is composed of ochreish rock which appears in patches where the grass will not grow. The heights are occupied by no less than three lighthouses only one of which is now in use. As the ship gets closer, a great spire appears round the cliff in the silvery shimmer of the morning haze and then a thousand roofs reflect the sunlight.

There are boats from Havre that take passengers up the winding river to Rouen and in this way much of the beautiful scenery may be enjoyed. By this means, however, the country appears as only a series of changing pictures and to see anything of the detail of such charming places as Caudebec, and Lillebonne, or the architectural features of Tancarville Castle and the Abbey of Jumieges, the road must be followed instead of the more leisurely river.

Havre with its great docks, its busy streets, and fast electric tramcars that frighten away foot passengers with noisy motor horns does not compel a very long stay, although one may chance to find much interest among the shipping, when such vessels as Mr Vanderbilt's magnificent steam yacht, without a mark on its spotless paint, is lying in one of the inner basins. If you wander up and down some of the old streets by the harbour you will find more than one many-storied house with shutters brightly painted, and dormers on its ancient roof. The church of Notre Dame in the Rue de Paris has a tower that was in earlier times a beacon, and it was here that three brothers named Raoulin who had been murdered by the governor Villars in 1599, are buried.

On the opposite side of the estuary of the Seine, lies Honfleur with its extraordinary church tower that stands in the market-place quite detached from the church of St Catherine to which it belongs. It is entirely constructed of timber and has great struts supporting the angles of its walls. The houses along the quay have a most paintable appearance, their overhanging floors and innumerable windows forming a picturesque background to the fishing-boats.

Harfleur, on the same side of the river as Havre, is on the road to Tancarville. We pass through it on our way to Caudebec. The great spire of the church, dating from the fifteenth century, rears itself above this ancient port where the black-sailed ships of the Northmen often appeared in the early days before Rollo had forced Charles the Simple (he should have been called "The Straightforward") to grant him the great tract of French territory that we are now about to explore.

The Seine, winding beneath bold cliffs on one side and along the edge of flat, rich meadowlands on the other, comes near the magnificent ruin of Tancarville Castle whose walls enclose an eighteenth century chateau. The situation on an isolated chalk cliff one hundred feet high was more formidable a century ago than it is to-day, for then the Seine ran close beneath the forbidding walls, while now it has changed its course somewhat. The entrance to the castle is approached under the shadow of the great circular corner tower that stands out so boldly at one extremity of the buildings, and the gate house has on either side semi-circular towers fifty-two feet in height. Above the archway there are three floors sparingly lighted by very small windows, one to each storey. They point out the first floor as containing the torture chamber, and in the towers adjoining are the hopelessly strong prisons. The iron bars are still in the windows and in one instance the positions of the rings to which the

prisoners were chained are still visible.

There are still floors in the Eagle's tower that forms the boldest portion of the castle, and it is a curious feature that the building is angular inside although perfectly cylindrical on the exterior. Near the chateau you may see the ruined chapel and the remains of the Salle des Chevaliers with its big fireplace. Then higher than the entrance towers is the Tour Coquesart built in the fifteenth century and having four storeys with a fireplace in each. The keep is near this, but outside the present castle and separated from it by a moat. The earliest parts of the castle all belong to the eleventh century, but so much destruction was wrought by Henry V. in 1417 that the greater part of the ruins belong to a few years after that date. The name of Tancarville had found a place among the great families of England before the last of the members of this distinguished French name lost his life at the battle of Agincourt. The heiress of the family married one of the Harcourts and eventually the possessions came into the hands of Dunois the Bastard of Orleans.

From Tancarville there is a road that brings you down to that which runs from Quilleboeuf, and by it one is soon brought to the picturesquely situated little town of Lillebonne, famous for its Roman theatre. It was the capital of the Caletes and was known as Juliabona, being mentioned in the iters of Antoninus. The theatre is so well known that no one has difficulty in finding it, and compared to most of the Roman remains in England, it is well worth seeing. The place held no fewer than three thousand people upon the semi-circular tiers of seats that are now covered with turf. Years ago, there was much stone-work to be seen, but this has largely disappeared, and it is only in the upper portions that many traces of mason's work are visible. A passage runs round the upper part of the theatre and the walls are composed of narrow stones that are not much larger than bricks.

The great castle was built by William the Norman, and it was here that he gathered together his barons to mature and work out his project which made him afterwards William the Conqueror. It will be natural to associate the fine round tower of the castle with this historic conference, but unfortunately, it was only built in the fourteenth century. From more than one point of view Lillebonne makes beautiful pictures, its roofs dominated by the great tower of the parish church as well as by the ruins of the castle.

We have lost sight of the Seine since we left Tancarville, but a ten-mile run brings us to the summit of a hill overlooking Caudebec and a great sweep of the beautiful river. The church raises its picturesque outline against the rolling white clouds, and forms a picture that compels admiration. On descending into the town, the antiquity and the quaintness of sixteenth century houses greet you frequently, and you do not wonder that Caudebec has attracted so many painters. There is a wide quay, shaded by an avenue of beautiful trees, and there are views across the broad, shining waters of the Seine, which here as in most of its length attracts

us by its breadth. The beautiful chalk hills drop steeply down to the water's edge on the northern shores in striking contrast to the flatness of the opposite banks. On the side of the river facing Caudebec, the peninsula enclosed by the windings of the Seine includes the great forest of Brotonne, and all around the town, the steep hills that tumble picturesquely on every side, are richly clothed with woods, so that with its architectural delights within, and its setting of forest, river and hill, Caudebec well deserves the name it has won for itself in England as well as in France.

Just off the road to Rouen from Caudebec and scarcely two miles away, is St Wandrille, situated in a charming hollow watered by the Fontanelle, a humble tributary of the great river. In those beautiful surroundings stand the ruins of the abbey church, almost entirely dating from the thirteenth century. Much destruction was done during the Revolution, but there is enough of the south transept and nave still in existence to show what the complete building must have been. In the wonderfully preserved cloister which is the gem of St Wandrille, there are some beautiful details in the doorway leading from the church, and there is much interest in the refectory and chapter house.

Down in the piece of country included in a long and narrow loop of the river stand the splendid ruins of the abbey of Jumieges with its three towers that stand out so conspicuously over the richly wooded country. When you get to the village and are close to the ruins of the great Benedictine abbey, you are not surprised that it was at one time numbered amongst the richest and most notable of the monastic foundations. The founder was St Philibert, but whatever the buildings which made their appearance in the seventh century may have been, is completely beyond our knowledge, for Jumieges was situated too close to the Seine to be overlooked by the harrying ship-loads of pirates from the north, who in the year 851 demolished everything. William Longue-Epee, son of Rollo the great leader of these Northmen, curiously enough commenced the rebuilding of the abbey, and it was completed in the year of the English conquest. Nearly the whole of the nave and towers present a splendid example of early Norman architecture, and it is much more inspiring to look upon the fine west front of this ruin than that of St Etienne at Caen which has an aspect so dull and uninspiring. The great round arches of the nave are supported by pillars which have the early type of capital distinguishing eleventh century work. The little chapel of St Pierre adjoining the abbey church is particularly interesting on account of the western portion which includes some of that early work built in the first half of the tenth century by William Longue-Epee. The tombstone of Nicholas Lerour, the abbot who was among the judges by whom the saintly Joan of Arc was condemned to death, is to be seen with others in the house which now serves as a museum. Associated with the same tragedy is another tombstone, that of Agnes Sorel, the mistress of Charles VII., that heartless king who made no effort to save the girl who had given him his throne.

Jumieges continued to be a perfectly preserved abbey occupied by its monks and hundreds of persons associated with them until scarcely more than a century ago. It was then allowed to go to complete ruin, and no restrictions seem to have been placed upon the people of the neighbourhood who as is usual under such circumstances, used the splendid buildings as a storehouse of ready dressed stone.

Making our way back to the highway, we pass through beautiful scenery, and once more reach the banks of the Seine at the town of Duclair which stands below the escarpment of chalk hills. There are wharves by the river-side which give the place a thriving aspect, for a considerable export trade is carried on in dairy produce.

After following the river-side for a time, the road begins to cut across the neck of land between two bends of the Seine. It climbs up towards the forest of Roumare and passes fairly close to the village of St Martin de Boscherville where the church of St George stands out conspicuously on its hillside. This splendid Norman building is the church of the Abbey built in the middle of the eleventh century by Raoul de Tancarville who was William's Chamberlain at the time of the conquest of England. The abbey buildings are now in ruins but the church has remained almost untouched during the eight centuries and more which have passed during which Normandy was often bathed in blood, and when towns and castles were sacked two or three times over. When the forest of Roumare, has been left behind, you come to Canteleu, a little village that stands at the top of a steep hill, commanding a huge view over Rouen, the historic capital of Normandy. You can see the shipping lying in the river, the factories, the spire of the cathedral, and the many church towers as well as the light framework of the modern moving bridge. This is the present day representative of the fantastic mediaeval city that witnessed the tragedy of Joan of Arc's trial and martyrdom. We will pass Rouen now, returning to it again in the next chapter.

The river for some distance becomes frequently punctuated with islands. Large extents of forest including those of Rouvray, Bonde and Elbeuf, spread themselves over the high ground to the west. The view from above Elbeuf in spite of its many tall chimney shafts includes such a fine stretch of fertile country that the scene is not easily forgotten.

Following the windings of the river through Pont-de-L'Arche and the forest of Louviers we come to that pleasant old town; but although close to the Seine, it stands on the little river Eure. Louviers remains in the memory as a town whose church is more crowded with elaborately carved stone-work than any outside Rouen. There is something rather odd, in the close juxtaposition of the Hotel Mouton d'Argent with its smooth plastered front and the almost overpowering mass of detail that faces it on the other side of the road. There is something curious, too, in the severe plainness of the tower that almost suggests the unnecessarily shabby clothing worn by some men whose wives are always to be seen in the most elaborate and costly gowns. Internally the church shows its twelfth century origin, but all the

intricate stone-work outside belongs to the fifteenth century. The porch which is, if possible, richer than the buttresses of the aisles, belongs to the flamboyant period, and actually dates from the year 1496. In the clerestory there is much sixteenth century glass and the aisles which are low and double give a rather unusual appearance.

The town contains several quaint and ancient houses, one of them supported by wooden posts projects over the pavement, another at the corner of the Marche des Oeufs has a very rich though battered piece of carved oak at the angle of the walls. It seems as if it had caught the infection of the extraordinary detail of the church porch. Down by the river there are many timber-framed houses with their foundations touching the water, with narrow wooden bridges crossing to the warehouses that line the other side. The Place de Rouen has a shady avenue of limes leading straight down to a great house in a garden beyond which rise wooded hills. Towards the river runs another avenue of limes trimmed squarely on top. These are pleasant features of so many French towns that make up for some of the deficiencies in other matters.

We could stay at Louviers for some time without exhausting all its attractions, but ten miles away at the extremity of another deep loop of the Seine there stands the great and historic Chateau-Gaillard that towers above Le Petit-Andely, the pretty village standing invitingly by a cleft in the hills. The road we traverse is that which appears so conspicuously in Turner's great painting of the Chateau-Gaillard. It crosses the bridge close under the towering chalk cliffs where the ruin stands so boldly. There is a road that follows the right bank of the river close to the railway, and it is from there that one of the strangest views of the castle is to be obtained. You may see it thrown up by a blaze of sunlight against the grassy heights behind that are all dark beneath the shadow of a cloud. The stone of the towers and heavily buttressed walls appears almost as white as the chalk which crops out in the form of cliffs along the river-side. An island crowded with willows that overhang the water partially hides the village of Le Petit-Andely, and close at hand above the steep slopes of grass that rise from the roadway tower great masses of gleaming white chalk projecting from the vivid turf as though they were the worn ruins of other castles. The whiteness is only broken by the horizontal lines of flints and the blue-grey shadows that fill the crevices.

From the hill above the Chateau there is another and even more striking view. It is the one that appears in Turner's picture just mentioned, and gives one some idea of the magnificent position that Richard Coeur de Lion chose, when in 1197 he decided to build an impregnable fortress on this bend of the Seine. It was soon after his return from captivity which followed the disastrous crusade that Richard commenced to show Philippe Auguste that he was determined to hold his French possessions with his whole strength. Philippe had warned John when the news of the release of the lion-hearted king from captivity had become known, that "the devil was unchained," and the building of this castle showed that Richard was making the most of his opportunities. The French king was, with some

justification, furious with his neighbour, for Richard had recently given his word not to fortify this place, and some fierce fighting would have ensued on top of the threats which the monarchs exchanged, but for the death of the English king in 1199. When John assumed the crown of England, however, Philippe soon found cause to quarrel with him, and thus the great siege of the castle was only postponed for three or four years. The French king brought his army across the peninsula formed by the Seine, and having succeeded in destroying the bridge beneath the castle, he constructed one for himself with boats and soon afterwards managed to capture the island, despite its strong fortifications. The leader of the English garrison was the courageous Roger de Lacy, Constable of Chester. From his knowledge of the character of his new king, de Lacy would have expected little assistance from the outside and would have relied upon his own resources to defend Richard's masterpiece. John made one attempt to succour the garrison. He brought his army across the level country and essayed to destroy the bridge of boats constructed by the French. This one effort proving unsuccessful he took no other measures to distract the besieging army, and left Roger de Lacy to the undivided attention of the Frenchmen. Then followed a terrible struggle. The French king succeeded in drawing his lines closer to the castle itself and eventually obtained possession of the outer fortifications and the village of Le Petit-Andely, from which the inhabitants fled to the protection of the castle. The governor had no wish to have all his supplies consumed by non-combatants, and soon compelled these defenceless folk to go out of the protection of his huge walls. At first the besiegers seemed to have allowed the people to pass unmolested, but probably realizing the embarrassment they would have been to the garrison, they altered their minds, and drove most of them back to the castle. Here they gained a reception almost as hostile as that of the enemy, and after being shot down by the arrows of the French they remained for days in a starving condition in a hollow between the hostile lines. Here they would all have died of hunger, but Philippe at last took pity on the terrible plight of these defenceless women and children and old folks, and having allowed them a small supply of provisions they were at last released from their ghastly position. Such a tragedy as this lends terrible pathos to the grassy steeps and hollows surrounding the chateau and one may almost be astonished that such callousness could have existed in these days of chivalry.

The siege was continued with rigour and a most strenuous attack was made upon the end of the castle that adjoined the high ground that overlooks the ruins. With magnificent courage the Frenchmen succeeded in mining the walls, and having rushed into the breach they soon made themselves masters of the outer courtyard. Continuing the assault, a small party of intrepid soldiers gained a foothold within the next series of fortifications, causing the English to retreat to the inner courtyard dominated by the enormous keep. Despite the magnificent resistance offered by de Lacy's men the besiegers raised their engines in front of the gate, and when at last they had forced an entry they contrived a feat that almost seems incredible—they cut off the garrison from their retreat to the keep. Thus this most famous of castles fell within half

a dozen years of its completion.

In the hundred years' war the Chateau-Gaillard was naturally one of the centres of the fiercest fighting, and the pages of history are full of references to the sieges and captures of the fortress, proving how even with the most primitive weapons these ponderous and unscalable walls were not as impregnable as they may have seemed to the builders. Like the abbey of Jumieges, this proud structure became nothing more than a quarry, for in the seventeenth century permission was given to two religious houses, one at Le Petit-Andely and the other at Le Grand-Andely to take whatever stone-work they required for their monastic establishments. Records show how more damage would have been done to the castle but for the frequent quarrels between these two religious houses as to their rights over the various parts of the ruins. When you climb up to the ruined citadel and look out of the windows that are now battered and shapeless, you can easily feel how the heart of the bold Richard must have swelled within him when he saw how his castle dominated an enormous belt of country. But you cannot help wondering whether he ever had misgivings over the unwelcome proximity of the chalky heights that rise so closely above the site of the ruin. We ourselves, are inclined to forget these questions of military strength in the serene beauty of the silvery river flowing on its serpentine course past groups of poplars, rich pastures dotted with cattle, forest lands and villages set amidst blossoming orchards. Down below are the warm chocolate-red roofs of the little town that has shared with the chateau its good and evil fortunes. The church with its slender spire occupies the central position, and it dates from precisely the same years as those which witnessed the advent of the fortress above. The little streets of the town are full of quaint timber-framed houses, and it is not surprising that this is one of the spots by the beautiful banks of the Seine that has attained a name for its picturesqueness.

With scarcely any perceptible division Le Grand-Andely joins the smaller village. It stands higher in the valley and is chiefly memorable for its beautiful inn, the Hotel du Grand Cerf. It is opposite the richly ornamented stone-work of the church of Notre Dame and dates chiefly from the sixteenth century. The hall contains a great fireplace, richly ornamented with a renaissance frieze and a fine iron stove-back. The courtyard shows carved timbers and in front the elaborate moulding beneath the eaves is supported by carved brackets. Unlike that old hostelry at Dives which is mentioned in another chapter, this hotel is not over restored, although in the days of a past proprietor the house contained a great number of antiques and its fame attracted many distinguished visitors, including Sir Walter Scott and Victor Hugo.

In writing of the hotel I am likely to forget the splendid painted glass in the church, but details of the stories told in these beautiful works of the sixteenth century are given in all good guides.

There is a pleasant valley behind Les Andelys running up towards the great plateau that occupies such an enormous area of this portion of Normandy.

The scenery as you go along the first part of the valley, through the little village of Harquency with its tiny Norman church, and cottages with thatched roofs all velvety with moss, is very charming. The country is entirely hedge-less, but as you look down upon the rather thirsty-looking valley below the road, the scenery savours much of Kent; the chalky fields, wooded uplands and big, picturesque farms suggesting some of the agricultural districts of the English county. When we join the broad and straight national road running towards Gisors we have reached the tableland just mentioned. There are perhaps, here and there, a group of stately elms, breaking the broad sweep of arable land that extends with no more undulations for many leagues than those of a sheet of old-fashioned glass. The horizon is formed by simply the same broad fields, vanishing in a thin, blue line over the rim of the earth.

[Illustration: THE FORTIFIED FARM NEAR GISORS]

At Les Thilliers, a small hamlet that, owing to situation at cross-roads figures conspicuously upon the milestones of the neighbourhood, the road to Gisors goes towards the east, and after crossing the valley of the Epte, you run down an easy gradient, passing a fine fortified farm-house with circular towers at each corner of its four sides and in a few minutes have turned into the historic old town of Gisors. It is as picturesque as any place in Normandy with the exception of Mont St Michel. The river Epte gliding slowly through its little canals at the sides of some of the streets, forms innumerable pictures when reflecting the quaint houses and gardens whose walls are generally grown over with creepers. Near the ascent to the castle is one of the washing places where the women let their soap suds float away on the translucent water as they scrub vigorously. They kneel upon a long wooden platform sheltered by a charming old roof supported upon a heavy timber framework that is a picture in itself.

If you stay at the Hotel de l'Ecu de France you are quite close to the castle that towers upon its hill right in the middle of the town. Most people who come to Gisors are surprised to find how historic is its castle, and how many have been the conflicts that have taken place around it. The position between Rouen and Paris and on the frontier of the Duchy gave it an importance in the days of the Norman kings that led to the erection of a most formidable stronghold. In the eleventh century, when William Rufus was on the throne of England, he made the place much stronger. Both Henry I. and Henry II. added to its fortifications so that Gisors became in time as formidable a castle as the Chateau Gaillard. During the Hundred Years' War, Gisors, which is often spoken of as the key to Normandy, after fierce struggles had become French. Then again, a determined assault would leave the flag of England fluttering upon its ramparts until again the Frenchmen would contrive to make themselves masters of the place. And so these constant changes of ownership went on until at last about the year 1450, a date which we shall find associated with the fall of every English stronghold in Normandy, Gisors surrendered to Charles VII. and has remained French ever since.

The outer baileys are defended by some great towers of massive Norman masonry from which you look all over the town and surrounding country. But within the inner courtyard rises a great mound dominated by the keep which you may still climb by a solid stone staircase. From here the view is very much finer than from the other towers and its commanding position would seem to give the defenders splendid opportunities for tiring out any besieging force. The concierge of the castle, a genial old woman of gipsy-like appearance takes you down to the fearful dungeon beneath one of the great towers on the eastern side, known as the Tour des Prisonniers. Here you may see the carvings in the stone-work executed by some of the prisoners who had been cast into this black abyss. These carvings include representations of crucifixes, St Christopher, and many excellently conceived and patiently wrought figures of other saints.

We have already had a fine view of the splendid Renaissance exterior of the church which is dedicated to the Saints Gervais and Protais. The choir is the earliest part of the building. It belongs to the thirteenth century, while the nave and most of the remaining portions date from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. It is a building of intense architectural interest and to some extent rivals the castle in the attention it deserves.

CHAPTER III

Concerning Rouen, the Ancient Capital of Normandy

When whole volumes have been written on Rouen it would be idle to attempt even a fragment of its history in a book of this nature. But all who go to Rouen should know something of its story in order to be able to make the most of the antiquities that the great city still retains. How much we would give to have an opportunity for seeing the Rouen which has vanished, for to-day as we walk along the modern streets there is often nothing to remind us of the centuries crowded with momentous events that have taken place where now the electric cars sweep to and fro and do their best to make one forget the Rouen of mediaeval times.

Of course, no one goes to the city expecting to find ancient walls and towers, or a really strong flavour of the middle ages, any more than one expects to obtain such impressions in the city of London. Rouen, however, contains sufficient relics of its past to convey a powerful impression upon the minds of all who have strong imaginations. There is the cathedral which contains the work of many centuries; there is the beautiful and inspiring church of St Ouen; there is the archway of the Grosse Horloge; there is the crypt of the church of St Gervais, that dates from the dim fifth century; and there are still in the narrow streets between the cathedral and the quays along the river-side, many tall, overhanging houses, whose age

appears in the sloping wall surfaces and in the ancient timbers that show themselves under the eaves and between the plaster-work.

Two of the most attractive views in Rouen are illustrated here. One of them shows the Portail de la Calende of the cathedral appearing at the end of a narrow street of antique, gabled houses, while overhead towers the stupendous fleche that forms the most prominent feature of Rouen. The other is the Grosse Horloge and if there had been space for a third it would have shown something of the interior of the church of St Ouen. The view of the city from the hill of Bon Secours forms another imposing feature, but I think that it hardly equals what we have already seen on the road from Caudebec.

When you come out of the railway station known as the *„Rive Droite“* a short street leads up to one of the most important thoroughfares, the Rue Jeanne d'Arc. It is perfectly straight and contains nothing in it that is not perfectly modern, but at the highest point you may see a marble tablet affixed to a wall. It bears a representation in the form of a gilded outline of the castle towers as they stood in the time of the Maid of Orleans, and a short distance behind this wall, but approached from another street, there still remains the keep of Rouen's historic castle. The circular tower contains the room which you may see to-day where Joan was brought before her judges and the instruments of torture by which the saintly maiden was to be frightened into giving careless answers to the questions with which she was plied by her clever judges. This stone vaulted room, although restored, is of thrilling interest to those who have studied the history of Joan of Arc, for, as we are told by Mr Theodore Cook in his "Story of Rouen," these are the only walls which are known to have echoed with her voice.

Those who have made a careful study of the ancient houses in the older streets of Rouen have been successful in tracing other buildings associated with the period of Joan of Arc's trial. The Rue St Romain, that narrow and not very salubrious thoroughfare that runs between the Rue de la Republique and the west front of the cathedral, has still some of the old canons' lodgings where some of the men who judged Joan of Arc actually lived. Among them, was Canon Guillaume le Desert who outlived all his fellow judges. There is still to be seen the house where lived the architect who designed the palace for Henry V. near Mal s'y Frotte. Mr Cook mentions that he has discovered a record which states that the iron cage in which Joan of Arc was chained by her hands, feet and neck was seen by a workman in this very house.

In the quaint and narrow streets that are still existing near the Rue St Romain, many strange-looking houses have survived to the present day. They stand on the site of the earliest nucleus of the present city, and it is in this neighbourhood that one gets most in touch with the Rouen that has so nearly vanished.

In this interesting portion of the city you come across the marvellously rich Grosse Horloge already mentioned. A casual glance would give one the impression that the structure was no older than the seventeenth century, but the actual date of its building is 1529, and the clock itself dates from about 1389, and is as old as any in France. The dial you see to-day is brilliantly coloured and has a red centre while the elaborate decoration that covers nearly the whole surface of the walls is freely gilded, giving an exceedingly rich appearance. The two fourteenth century bells, one known as La Rouvel or the Silver Bell on account of the legend that silver coins were thrown into the mould when it was cast, and the other known as Cache-Ribaut, are still in the tower, La Rouvel being still rung for a quarter of an hour at nine o'clock in the evening. It is the ancient Curfew, and the Tower de la Grosse Horloge is nothing more than the historic belfry of Rouen, although one might imagine by the way it stands over the street on an elliptical arch, that it had formed one of the gates of the city.

At the foot of the belfry is one of those richly sculptured fountains that are to be seen in two or three places in the older streets. The carving is very much blackened with age, and the detail is not very easily discernible, but a close examination will show that the story of Arethusa, and Alpheus, the river-god, is portrayed. The fountain was given to Rouen by the Duke of Luxembourg early in the eighteenth century.

Adjoining the imposing Rue Jeanne d'Arc is the fine Gothic Palais de Justice, part of which was built by Louis XII. in the year 1499, the central portion being added by Leroux, sixteen years later. These great buildings were put up chiefly for the uses of the Echiquier—the supreme court of the Duchy at that time—but it was also to be used as an exchange for merchants who before this date had been in the habit of transacting much of their business in the cathedral. The historic hall where the Echiquier met is still to be seen. The carved oak of the roof has great gilded pendants that stand out against the blackness of the wood-work, and the Crucifixion presented by Louis XII. may be noticed among the portraits in the Chambre du Conseille.

The earliest portions of the great cathedral of Notre Dame date from the twelfth century, the north tower showing most palpably the transition from Norman work to the Early French style of Gothic. By the year 1255 when Louis IX. came to Rouen to spend Christmas, the choir, transepts and nave of the cathedral, almost as they may be seen to-day, had been completed. The chapel to St Mary did not make its appearance for some years, and the side _portails_ were only added in the fifteenth century. The elaborate work on the west front belongs to the century following, and although the ideas of modern architects have varied as to this portion of the cathedral, the consensus of opinion seems to agree that it is one of the most perfect examples of the flamboyant style so prevalent in the churches of Normandy. The detail of this masterpiece of the latest phase of Gothic architecture is almost bewildering, but the ornament in every place has a purpose, so that the whole mass of detail has a reposeful dignity which can only have

been retained by the most consummate skill. The canopied niches are in many instances vacant, but there are still rows of saints in the long lines of recesses. The rose window is a most perfect piece of work; it is filled with painted glass in which strong blues and crimsons are predominant. Above the central tower known as the Tour de Pierre, that was built partially in the thirteenth century, there rises the astonishing iron spire that is one of the highest in the world. Its weight is enormous despite the fact that it is merely an open framework. The architect of this masterly piece of work whose name was Alavoine seems to have devoted himself with the same intensity as Barry, to whom we owe the Royal Courts of Justice in London, for he worked upon it from 1823, the year following the destruction of the wooden spire by lightning, until 1834, the year of his death. The spire, however, which was commenced almost immediately after the loss of the old one, remained incomplete for over forty years and it was not entirely finished until 1876. The flight of eight hundred and twelve steps that is perfectly safe for any one with steady nerves goes right up inside the spire until, as you look out between the iron framework, Rouen lies beneath your feet, a confused mass of detail cut through by the silver river.

The tower of St Romain is on the north side of the cathedral. It was finished towards the end of the fifteenth century, but the lower portion is of very much earlier date for it is the only portion of the cathedral that was standing when Richard I. on his way to the Holy Land knelt before Archbishop Gautier to receive the sword and banner which he carried with him to the Crusade.

The Tour de Beurre is on the southern side—its name being originated in connection with those of the faithful who during certain Lents paid for indulgences in order to be allowed to eat butter. It was commenced in 1485, and took twenty-two years to complete. In this great tower there used to hang a famous bell. It was called the Georges d'Amboise after the great Cardinal to whom Rouen owes so much, not only as builder of the tower and the facade, but also as the originator of sanitary reforms and a thousand other benefits for which the city had reason to be grateful. The great bell was no less than 30 feet in circumference, its weight being 36,000 lbs. The man who succeeded in casting it, whose name was Jean Le Machon, seems to have been so overwhelmed at his success that scarcely a month later he died. At last when Louis XVI. came to Rouen, they rang Georges d'Amboise so loudly that a crack appeared, and a few years later, during the Revolution, Le Machon's masterpiece was melted down for cannon.

Inside the cathedral there are, besides the glories of the splendid Gothic architecture, the tombs of Henry Plantagenet, the eldest son of Henry II., and Richard I. There are also the beautifully carved miserere seats in the choir which are of particular interest in the way they illustrate many details of daily life in the fifteenth century. The stone figure representing Richard Coeur de Lion lies outside the railings of the sanctuary. The heart of the king which has long since fallen into dust is contained in a casket that is enclosed in the stone beneath the effigy. The

figure of Henry Plantagenet is not the original—you may see that in the museum, which contains so many fascinating objects that are associated with the early history of Rouen. The splendid sixteenth century monument of the two Cardinals d'Amboise is to be seen in the Chapelle de la Sainte Vierge. The kneeling figures in the canopied recess represent the two Cardinals—that on the right, which is said to be a very good portrait, represents the famous man who added so much to the cathedral—the one on the left shows his nephew, the second Cardinal Georges d'Amboise. In the middle of the recess there is a fine sculpture showing St George and the Dragon, and most of the other surfaces of the tomb are composed of richly ornamented niches, containing statuettes of saints, bishops, the Virgin and Child, and the twelve Apostles. Another remarkable tomb is that of Louis de Breze, considered to be one of the finest specimens of Renaissance work. It is built in two storeys—the upper one showing a thrilling representation of the knight in complete armour and mounted upon his war-horse, but upon the sarcophagus below he is shown with terrible reality as a naked corpse. The sculptor was possibly Jean Goujon, whose name is sometimes associated with the monument to the two Cardinals, which is of an earlier date.

The tomb of Rollo, the founder of the Duchy of Normandy, and the first of the Normans to embrace the Christian religion, lies in a chapel adjoining the south transept. The effigy belongs to the fourteenth century, but the marble tablet gives an inscription which may be translated as follows: "Here lies Rollo, the first Duke and founder and father of Normandy, of which he was at first the terror and scourge, but afterwards the restorer. Baptised in 912 by Francon, Archbishop of Rouen, and died in 917. His remains were at first deposited in the ancient sanctuary, at present the upper end of the nave. The altar having been removed, the remains of the prince were placed here by the blessed Maurille, Archbishop of Rouen in the year 1063." The effigy of William Longsword, Rollo's son, is in another chapel of the nave, that adjoining the north transept. His effigy, like that of his father, dates from the fourteenth century. It is in surroundings of this character that we are brought most in touch with the Rouen of our imaginations.

We have already in a preceding chapter seen something of the interior of the church of St Ouen, which to many is more inspiring than the cathedral. The original church belonged to the Abbey of St Ouen, established in the reign of Clothaire I. When the Northmen came sailing up the river, laying waste to everything within their reach, the place was destroyed, but after Rollo's conversion to Christianity the abbey was renovated, and in 1046 a new church was commenced, which having taken about eighty years to complete was almost immediately burnt down. Another fire having taken place a century later, Jean Roussel, who was Abbot in 1318, commenced this present building. It was an enormous work to undertake but yet within twenty-one years the choirs and transepts were almost entirely completed. This great Abbot was buried in the Mary chapel behind the High Altar. On the tomb he is called Marc d'Argent and the date of his death is given as December 7, 1339. After this the building of the church went on all through the century. The man who was master mason in this period was Alexandre

Barneval, but he seems to have become jealous of an apprentice who built the rose window that is still such a splendid feature of the north transept, for in a moment of passion he killed the apprentice and for this crime was sentenced to death in the year 1440. St Ouen was completed in the sixteenth century, but the west front as it appears to-day has two spires which made their appearance in recent times. The exterior, however, is not the chief charm of St Ouen; it is the magnificent interior, so huge and yet so inspiring, that so completely satisfies one's ideas of proportion. Wherever you stand, the vistas of arches, all dark and gloomy, relieved here and there by a blaze of coloured glass, are so splendid that you cannot easily imagine anything finer. A notable feature of the aisles is the enormous space of glass covering the outer walls, so that the framework of the windows seems scarcely adequate to support the vaulted roof above. The central tower is supported by magnificent clustered piers of dark and swarthy masonry, and the views of these from the transepts or from the aisles of the nave make some of the finest pictures that are to be obtained in this masterpiece of Gothic architecture. The tower that rises from the north transept belongs, it is believed, to the twelfth century church that was burnt. On the western front it is interesting to find statues of William the Conqueror, Henry II. and Richard Coeur de Lion among other dukes of Normandy, and the most famous Archbishops of Rouen.

Besides the cathedral and St Ouen there is the splendid church of St Maclou. Its western front suddenly appears, filling a gap in the blocks of modern shops on the right hand side as you go up the Rue de la Republic. The richness of the mass of carved stone-work arrests your attention, for after having seen the magnificent facade of the cathedral you would think the city could boast nothing else of such extraordinary splendour. The name Maclou comes from Scotland, for it was a member of this clan, who, having fled to Brittany, became Bishop of Aleth and died in 561. Since the tenth century a shrine to his memory had been placed outside the walls of Rouen. The present building was designed by Pierre Robin and it dates from between 1437 and 1520, but the present spire is modern, having replaced the old one about the time of the Revolution. The richly carved doors of the west front are the work of Jean Goujon. The organ loft rests on two columns of black marble, which are also his work; but although the dim interior is full of interest and its rose windows blaze with fifteenth century glass, it is the west front and carved doors that are the most memorable features of the building.

In the Place du Marche Vieux you may see the actual spot where Joan of Arc was burnt, a stone on the ground bearing the words "Jeanne Darc, 30 Mai, 1431." To all who have really studied the life, the trial and the death of the Maid of Orleans—and surely no one should visit Rouen without such knowledge—this is the most sacred spot in the city, for as we stand here we can almost hear her words addressed to Cauchon, "It is you who have brought me to this death." We can see her confessor holding aloft the cross and we seem to hear her breathe the Redeemer's name before she expires.

CHAPTER IV

Concerning the Cathedral City of Evreux and the Road to Bernay

The tolling of the deep-toned bourdon in the cathedral tower reverberates over the old town of Evreux as we pass along the cobbled streets. There is a yellow evening light overhead, and the painted stucco walls of the houses reflect the soft, glowing colour of the west. In the courtyard of the Hotel du Grand Cerf, too, every thing is bathed in this beautiful light and the double line of closely trimmed laurels has not yet been deserted by the golden flood. But Evreux does not really require a fine evening to make it attractive, although there is no town in existence that is not improved under such conditions. With the magnificent cathedral, the belfry, the Norman church of St Taurin and the museum, besides many quaint peeps by the much sub-divided river Iton that flows through the town, there is sufficient to interest one even on the dullest of dull days.

Of all the cathedral interiors in Normandy there are none that possess a finer or more perfectly proportioned nave than Evreux, and if I were asked to point out the two most impressive interiors of the churches in this division of France I should couple the cathedral at Evreux with St Ouen at Rouen.

It was our own Henry I. who having destroyed the previous building set to work to build a new one and it is his nave that we see to-day. The whole cathedral has since that time been made to reflect the changing ideals of the seven centuries that have passed. The west front belongs entirely to the Renaissance period and the north transept is in the flamboyant style of the fifteenth century so much in evidence in Normandy and so infrequent in England.

The central tower with its tall steeple now encased in scaffolding was built in 1470 by Cardinal Balue, Bishop of Evreux and inventor of the fearful wooden cages in one of which the prisoner Dubourg died at Mont St Michel.

In most of the windows there is old and richly coloured glass; those in the chancel have stronger tones, but they all transform the shafts of light into gorgeous rainbow effects which stand out in wonderful contrast to the delicate, creamy white of the stone-work. Pale blue banners are suspended in the chancel, and the groining above is coloured on each side of the bosses for a short distance, so that as one looks up the great sweep of the nave, the banners and the brilliant fifteenth century glass appear as vivid patches of colour beyond the uniform, creamy grey on either side. The Norman towers at the west end of the cathedral are completely hidden in the mask of classical work planted on top of the older stone-work in the sixteenth century, and more recent restoration has altered some of the

other features of the exterior. At the present day the process of restoration still goes on, but the faults of our grandfathers fortunately are not repeated.

Leaving the Place Parvis by the Rue de l'Horloge you come to the great open space in front of the Hotel de Ville and the theatre with the museum on the right, in which there are several Roman remains discovered at Vieil-Evreux, among them being a bronze statue of Jupiter Stator. On the opposite side of the Place stands the beautiful town belfry built at the end of the fifteenth century. There was an earlier one before that time, but I do not know whether it had been destroyed during the wars with the English, or whether the people of Evreux merely raised the present graceful tower in place of the older one with a view to beautifying the town. The bell, which was cast in 1406 may have hung in the former structure, and there is some fascination in hearing its notes when one realises how these same sound waves have fallen on the ears of the long procession of players who have performed their parts within its hearing. A branch of the Iton runs past the foot of the tower in canal fashion; it is backed by old houses and crossed by many a bridge, and helps to build up a suitable foreground to the beautiful old belfry, which seems to look across to the brand new Hotel de Ville with an injured expression. From the Boulevard Chambaudouin there is a good view of one side of the Bishop's palace which lies on the south side of the cathedral, and is joined to it by a gallery and the remains of the cloister. The walls are strongly fortified, and in front of them runs a branch of one of the canals of the Iton, that must have originally served as a moat.

Out towards the long straight avenue that runs out of the town in the direction of Caen, there may be seen the Norman church of St Taurin. It is all that is left of the Benedictine abbey that once stood here. Many people who explore this interesting church fail to see the silver-gilt reliquary of the twelfth century that is shown to visitors who make the necessary inquiries. The richness of its enamels and the elaborate ornamentation studded with imitation gems that have replaced the real ones, makes this casket almost unique.

Many scenes from the life of the saint are shown in the windows of the choir of the church. They are really most interesting, and the glass is very beautiful. The south door must have been crowded with the most elaborate ornament, but the delicately carved stone-work has been hacked away and the thin pillars replaced by crude, uncarved chunks of stone. There is Norman arcading outside the north transept as well as just above the floor in the north aisle. St Taurin is a somewhat dilapidated and cob-webby church, but it is certainly one of the interesting features of Evreux.

Instead of keeping on the road to Caen after reaching the end of the great avenue just mentioned, we turn towards the south and soon enter pretty pastoral scenery. The cottages are almost in every instance thatched, with ridges plastered over with a kind of cobb mud. In the cracks in this

curious ridging, grass seeds and all sorts of wild flowers are soon deposited, so that upon the roof of nearly every cottage there is a luxuriant growth of grass and flowers. In some cases yellow irises alone ornament the roofs, and they frequently grow on the tops of the walls that are treated in a similar fashion. A few miles out of Evreux you pass a hamlet with a quaint little church built right upon the roadway with no churchyard or wall of any description. A few broken gravestones of quite recent date litter the narrow, dusty space between the north side of the church and the roadway. Inside there is an untidy aspect to everything, but there are some windows containing very fine thirteenth century glass which the genial old cure shows with great delight, for it is said that they were intended for the cathedral at Evreux, but by some chance remained in this obscure hamlet. The cure also points out the damage done to the windows by *socialistes* at a recent date.

By the roadside towards Conches, there are magpies everywhere, punctuated by yellow hammers and nightingales. The cottages have thatch of a very deep brown colour over the hipped roofs, closely resembling those in the out-of-the-way parts of Sussex. It a beautiful country, and the delightfully situated town of Conches at the edge of its forest is well matched with its surroundings.

In the middle of the day the inhabitants seem to entirely disappear from the sunny street, and everything has a placid and reposeful appearance as though the place revelled in its quaintness. Backed by the dense masses of forest there is a sloping green where an avenue of great chestnuts tower above the long, low roof of the timber-framed cattle shelter. On the highest part of the hill stands the castle, whose round, central tower shows above the trees that grow thickly on the slopes of the hill. Close to the castle is the graceful church, and beyond are the clustered roofs of the houses. A viaduct runs full tilt against the hill nearly beneath the church, and then the railway pierces the hill on its way towards Bernay. The tall spire of the church of St Foy is comparatively new, for the whole structure was rebuilt in the fifteenth century, but its stained glass is of exceptional interest. Its richness of colour and the interest of the subjects indicate some unusually gifted artist, and one is not surprised to discover that they were designed by Aldegrevers, who was trained by that great master Albrecht Dyrer. Altogether there are twenty-one of these beautiful windows. Seven occupy the eastern end of the apse and give scenes taken from the life of St Foy.

You can reach the castle by passing through the quaint archway of the Hotel de Ville, and then passing through the shady public garden you plunge into the dry moat that surrounds the fortified mound. There is not very much to see but what appears in a distant view of the town, and in many ways the outside groupings of the worn ruin and the church roofs and spire above the houses are better than the scenes in the town itself. The Hotel Croix Blanche is a pleasant little house for dejeuner. Everything is extremely simple and typical of the family methods of the small French inn, where excellent cooking goes along with many primitive usages. The cool salle-

a-manger is reached through the general living-room and kitchen, which is largely filled with the table where you may see the proprietor and his family partaking of their own meals. There seems no room to cook anything at all, and yet when you are seated in the next room the daughter of the family, an attractive and neatly dressed girl, gracefully serves the most admirable courses, worthy and perhaps better than what one may expect to obtain in the best hotel in Rouen.

There is a road that passes right through the forest of Conches towards Rugles, but that must be left for another occasion if we are to see anything of the charms of Beaumont-le-Roger, the perfectly situated little town that lies half-way between Conches and Bernay.

The long street of the town containing some very charming peeps as you go towards the church is really a terrace on the limestone hills that rises behind the houses on the right, and falls steeply on the left. Spaces between the houses and narrow turnings give glimpses of the rich green country down below. From the lower level you see the rocky ridge above clothed in a profusion of trees. The most perfect picture in the town is from the river bank just by the bridge. In the foreground is the mirror-like stream that gives its own rendering of the scene that is built up above it. Leaning upon a parapet of the bridge is a man with a rod who is causing tragedies in the life that teems beneath the glassy surface. Beyond the bridge appear some quaint red roofs with one tower-like house with an overhanging upper storey. Higher up comes the precipitous hill divided into terraces by the huge walls that surround the abbey buildings, and still higher, but much below the highest part of the hill, are the picturesque ruins of the abbey. On the summit of the ridge dominating all are the insignificant remains of the castle built by Roger a la Barbe, whose name survives in that of the town. His family were the founders of the abbey that flourished for several centuries, but finally, about a hundred years ago, the buildings were converted to the uses of a factory! Spinning and weaving might have still been going on but for a big fire that destroyed the whole place. There was, however, a considerably more complete series of buildings left than we can see to-day, but scarcely more than fifty years ago the place was largely demolished for building materials. The view from the river Rille is therefore the best the ruin can boast, for seen from that point the arches rise up against the green background as a stately ruin, and the tangled mass of weeds and debris are invisible. The entrance is most inviting. It is down at the foot of the cliff, and the archway with the steep ascent inside suggests all sorts of delights beyond, as it stands there just by the main street of the town. I was sorry afterwards, that I had accepted that hospitality, for with the exception of a group of merry children playing in an orchard and some big caves hollowed out of the foot of the cliff that rises still higher, I saw nothing but a jungle of nettles. This warning should not, however, suggest that Beaumont-le-Roger is a poor place to visit. Not only is it a charming, I may say a fascinating spot to visit, but it is also a place in which to stay, for the longer you remain there the less do you like the idea of leaving. The church of St Nicholas standing in the main street where it

becomes much wider and forms a small Place, is a beautiful old building whose mellow colours on stone-work and tiles glow vividly on a sunny afternoon. There is a great stone wall forming the side of the rocky platform that supports the building and the entrance is by steps that lead up to the west end. The tower belongs to the flamboyant period and high up on its parapet you may see a small statue of Regulus who does duty as a "Jack-smite-the-clock." Just by the porch there leans against a wall a most ponderous grave slab which was made for the tomb of Jehan du Moustier a soldier of the fourteenth century who fought for that Charles of Navarre who was surnamed "The Bad." The classic additions to the western part of the church seem strangely out of sympathy with the gargoyles overhead and the thirteenth century arcades of the nave, but this mixing up of styles is really more incongruous in description than in reality.

When you have decided to leave Beaumont-le-Roger and have passed across the old bridge and out into the well-watered plain, the position of the little town suggests that of the village of Pulborough in Sussex, where a road goes downhill to a bridge and then crosses the rich meadowland where the river Arun winds among the pastures in just the same fashion as the Rille.

At a bend in the road to Bernay stands the village of Serquigny. It is just at the edge of the forest of Beaumont which we have been skirting, and besides having a church partially belonging to the twelfth century it has traces of a Roman Camp. All the rest of the way to Bernay the road follows the railway and the river Charentonne until the long—and when you are looking out for the hotel—seemingly endless street of Bernay is reached. After the wonderful combination of charms that are flaunted by Beaumont-le-Roger it is possible to grumble at the plainer features of Bernay, but there is really no reason to hurry out of the town for there is much quaint architecture to be seen, and near the Hotel du Lion d'Or there is a house built right over the street resting on solid wooden posts. But more interesting than the domestic architecture are the remains of the abbey founded by Judith of Brittany very early in the eleventh century for it is probably one of the oldest Romanesque remains in Normandy. The church is cut up into various rooms and shops at the choir end, and there has been much indiscriminate ill-treatment of the ancient stone-work. Much of the structure, including the plain round arches and square columns, is of the very earliest Norman period, having been built in the first half of the eleventh century, but in later times classic ornament was added to the work of those shadowy times when the kingdom of Normandy had not long been established. So much alteration in the styles of decoration has taken place in the building that it is possible to be certain of the date of only some portions of the structure. The Hotel de Ville now occupies part of the abbey buildings.

At the eastern side of the town stands St Croix, a fifteenth century church with a most spacious interior. There is much beautiful glass dating from three hundred years ago in the windows of the nave and transepts, but perhaps the feature which will be remembered most when other impressions

have vanished, will be the finely carved statues belonging to the fourteenth century which were brought here from the Abbey of Bec. The south transept contains a monument to Guillaume Arvilarensis, an abbot of Bec who died in 1418. Upon the great altar which is believed to have been brought from the Abbey of Bec, there are eight marble columns surrounding a small white marble figure of the Child Jesus.

Another church at Bernay is that of Notre Dame de la Couture. It has much fourteenth century work and behind the high altar there are five chapels, the centre one containing a copy of the "sacred image" of Notre Dame which stands by the column immediately to the right of the entrance. Much more could be said of these three churches with their various styles of architecture extending from the very earliest period down to the classic work of the seventeenth century. But this is not the place for intricate descriptions of architectural detail which are chiefly useful in books which are intended for carrying from place to place.

CHAPTER V

Concerning Lisieux and the Romantic Town of Falaise

Lisieux is so rich in the curious timber-framed houses of the middle and later ages that there are some examples actually visible immediately outside the railway station whereas in most cases one usually finds an aggregation of uninteresting modern buildings. As you go towards the centre of the town the old houses, which have only been dotted about here and there, join hands and form whole streets of the most romantic and almost stage-like picturesqueness. The narrow street illustrated here is the Rue aux Fevres. Its houses are astonishingly fine, and it forms—especially in the evening—a background suitable for any of the stirring scenes that took place in such grand old towns as Lisieux in medieval days. This street is however, only one of several that reek of history. In the Rue des Boucheries and in the Grande Rue there are lovely overhanging gables and curious timber-framing that is now at any angle but what was originally intended. There is really so much individual quaintness in these houses that they deserve infinitely more than the scurry past them which so frequently is all their attractions obtain. The narrowness and fustiness of the Rue aux Fevres certainly hinder you from spending much time in examining the houses but there are two which deserve a few minutes' individual attention. One which has a very wide gable and the upper floors boarded is believed to be of very great antiquity, dating from as early a period as the thirteenth century. It is numbered thirty-three, and must not be confused with the richly ornamented Manoir de Francois I. The timber work of this house, especially of the two lower floors is covered with elaborate carving including curious animals and quaint little figures, and also the salamander of the royal house. For this reason the photographs

sold in the shops label the house "Manoir de la Salamandre." The place is now fast going to ruin—a most pitiable sight and I for one, would prefer to see the place restored rather than it should be allowed to become so hopelessly dilapidated and rotten that the question of its preservation should come to be considered lightly.

If the town authorities of Lisieux chose to do so, they could encourage the townfolk to enrich many of their streets by a judicious flaking off of the plaster which in so many cases tries to hide all the pleasant features of houses that have seen at least three centuries, but this sort of work when in the hands of only partially educated folk is liable to produce a worse state of affairs than if things had been left untouched. An example of what over-restoration can do, may be seen when we reach the beautiful old inn at Dives.

The two churches of Lisieux are well fitted to their surroundings, and although St Jacques has no graceful tower or fleche, the quaintness of its shingled belfry makes up for the lack of the more stately towers of St Pierre. Where the stone-work has stopped short the buttresses are roofed with the quaintest semi-circular caps, and over the clock there are two more odd-looking pepper boxes perched upon the steep slope that projects from the square belfry. Over all there is a low pyramidal roof, stained with orange lichen and making a great contrast in colour to the weather-beaten stone-work down below. There are small patches of tiled roofing to the buttresses at the western ends of the aisles and these also add colour to this picturesque building. The great double flight of stone steps which lead to the imposing western door have balustrades filled with flamboyant tracery, but although the church is built up in this way, the floor in the interior is not level, for it slopes gently up towards the east. The building was commenced during the reign of Louis XII. and not finished until nearly the end of the reign of Francois I. It is therefore coeval with that richly carved house in the Rue aux Fevres. Along the sides of the church there project a double row of thirsty-looking gargoyles—the upper ones having their shoulders supported by the mass of masonry supporting the flying buttresses. The interior is richer than the exterior, and you may see on some of the pillars remains of sixteenth century paintings. A picture dating from 1681 occupies a position in the chapel of St Ursin in the south aisle; it shows the relic of the saint being brought to Lisieux in 1055.

The wide and sunny Place Thiers is dominated by the great church of St Pierre, which was left practically in its present form in the year 1233. The first church was begun some years before the conquest of England but about a century later it suffered the fate of Bayeux being burnt down in 1136. It was reconstructed soon afterwards and shows to-day the first period of Gothic architecture that became prevalent in Normandy. Only the north tower dates from this period, the other one had to be rebuilt during the reign of Henri III. and the spire only made its appearance in the seventeenth century. The Lady Chapel is of particular interest owing to the statement that it was built by that Bishop of Beauvais who took such a

prominent part in the trial of Joan of Arc. The main arches over the big west door are now bare of carving or ornament and the Hotel de Ville is built right up against the north-west corner, but despite this St Pierre has the most imposing and stately appearance, and there are many features such as the curious turrets of the south transept that impress themselves on the memory more than some of the other churches we have seen.

Lisieux is one of those cheerful towns that appear always clean and bright under the dullest skies, so that when the sun shines every view seems freshly painted and blazing with colour. The freshness of the atmosphere, too, is seldom tainted with those peculiar odours that some French towns produce with such enormous prodigality, and Lisieux may therefore claim a further point in its favour.

It is generally a wide, hedgeless stretch of country that lies between Lisieux and Falaise, but for the first ten miles there are big farm-houses with timber-framed barns and many orchards bearing a profusion of blossom near the roadside. A small farm perched above the road and quite out of sight, invites the thirsty passer-by to turn aside up a steep path to partake of cider or coffee. It is a simple, almost bare room where the refreshment is served, but its quaintness and shadowy coolness are most refreshing. The fireplace has an open hearth with a wood fire which can soon be blown into a blaze by the big bellows that hang against the chimney corner. A table by one of the windows is generally occupied in her spare moments by the farmer's pretty daughter who puts aside her knitting to fetch the cider or to blow up the fire for coffee. They are a most genial family and seem to find infinite delight in plying English folk with questions for I imagine that not many find their way to this sequestered corner among waving trees and lovely orchards.

A sudden descent before reaching St Pierre-sur-Dives gives a great view over the level country below where everything is brilliantly green and garden-like. The village first shows its imposing church through the trees of a straight avenue leading towards the village which also possesses a fine Market Hall that must be at least six hundred years old. The church is now undergoing restoration externally, but by dodging the falling cement dust you may go inside, perhaps to be disappointed that there is not more of the Norman work that has been noticed in the southern tower that rises above the entrance. The village, or it should really be called a small town, for its population is over a thousand, has much in it that is attractive and quaint, and it might gain more attention if everyone who passes through its streets were not hurrying forward to Falaise.

The country now becomes a great plain, hedgeless, and at times almost featureless. The sun in the afternoon throws the shadows of the roadside trees at right angles, so that the road becomes divided into accurate squares by the thin lines of shadow. The straight run from St Pierre is broken where the road crosses the Dives. It is a pretty spot with a farm, a manor-house and a washing place for women just below the bridge, and then follows more open road and more interminable perspectives cutting through

the open plain until, with considerable satisfaction, the great thoroughfare from Caen is joined and soon afterwards a glimpse of the castle greets us as we enter Falaise.

There is something peculiarly fascinating about Falaise, for it combines many of the features that are sparingly distributed in other towns. Its position on a hill with deep valleys on all sides, its romantic castle, the two beautiful churches and the splendid thirteenth century gateway, form the best remembered attractions, but beyond these there are the hundred and one pretty groupings of the cottages that crowd both banks of the little river Ante down in the valley under the awe-inspiring castle.

Even then, no mention has been made of the ancient fronts that greet one in many of the streets, and the charms of some of the sudden openings between the houses that give views of the steep, wooded hollows that almost touch the main street, have been slighted. A huge cube of solid masonry with a great cylindrical tower alongside perched upon a mass of rock precipitous on two sides is the distant view of the castle, and coming closer, although you can see the buttresses that spring from the rocky foundations, the description still holds good. You should see the fortress in the twilight with a golden suffusion in the sky and strange, purplish shadows on the castle walls. It then has much the appearance of one of those unassailable strongholds where a beautiful princess is lying in captivity waiting for a chivalrous knight who with a band of faithful men will attempt to scale the inaccessible walls. Under some skies, the castle assumes the character of one of Turner's impressions, half real and half imaginary, and under no skies does this most formidable relic of feudal days ever lose its grand and awesome aspect. The entrance is through a gateway, the Porte St. Nicolas, which was built in the thirteenth century. There you are taken in hand by a pleasant concierge who will lead you first of all to the Tour La Reine, where he will point out a great breach in the wall made by Henri IV. when he successfully assaulted the castle after a bombardment with his artillery which he had kept up for a week. This was in 1589, and since then no other fighting has taken place round these grand old walls. The ivy that clings to the ruins and the avenue of limes that leads up to the great keep are full of jackdaws which wheel round the rock in great flights. You have a close view of the great Tour Talbot, and then pass through a small doorway in the northern face of the citadel. Inside, the appearance of the walls reveals the restoration which has taken place within recent years. But this, fortunately, does not detract to any serious extent from the interest of the whole place. Up on the ramparts there are fine views over the surrounding country, and immediately beneath the precipice below nestle the picturesque, brown-red roofs of the lower part of the town. Just at the foot of the castle rock there is still to be seen a tannery which is of rather unusual interest in connection with the story of how Robert le Diable was first struck by the charms of Arlette, the beautiful daughter of a tanner. The Norman duke was supposed to have been looking over the battlements when he saw this girl washing clothes in the river, and we are told that owing to the warmth of the day she had drawn up her dress, so

that her feet, which are spoken of as being particularly beautiful were revealed to his admiring gaze. Arlette afterwards became the mother of William the Conqueror, and the room is pointed out in the south-west corner of the keep in which we are asked to believe that the Conqueror of England was born. It is, however, unfortunate for the legend that archaeologists do not allow such an early date for the present castle, and thus we are not even allowed to associate these ramparts with the legend just mentioned. It must have been a strong building that preceded this present structure, for during the eleventh century William the Norman was often obliged to retreat for safety to his impregnable birthplace. The Tour Talbot has below its lowest floor what seems to be a dungeon, but it is said that prisoners were not kept here, the place being used merely for storing food. The gloomy chamber, however, is generally called an oubliette. Above, there are other floors, the top one having been used by the governor of the castle. In the thickness of the wall there is a deep well which now contains no water. One of the rooms in the keep is pointed out as that in which Prince Arthur was kept in confinement, but although it is known that the unfortunate youth was imprisoned in this castle, the selection of the room seems to be somewhat arbitrary.

In 1428 the news of Joan of Arc's continued successes was brought to the Earl of Salisbury who was then governor of Falaise Castle, and it was from here that he started with an army to endeavour to stop that triumphal progress. In 1450 when the French completely overcame the numerous English garrisons in the towns of Normandy, Falaise with its magnificent position held out for some time. The defenders sallied out from the walls of the town but were forced back again, and notwithstanding their courage, the town capitulated to the Duke of Alencon's army at almost the same time as Avranches and a dozen other strongly defended towns. We can picture to ourselves the men in glinting head-pieces sallying from the splendid old gateway known as the Port des Cordeliers. It has not lost its formidable appearance even to-day, though as you look through the archway the scene is quiet enough, and the steep flight of outside steps leads up to scenes of quiet domestic life. The windows overlook the narrow valley beneath where the humble roofs of the cottages jostle one another for space. There are many people who visit Falaise who never have the curiosity to explore this unusually pleasing part of the town. In the spring when the lilac bushes add their brilliant colour to the russet brown tiles and soft creams of the stone-work, there are pictures on every side. Looking in the cottages you may see, generally within a few feet of the door, one of those ingenious weaving machines that are worked with a treadle, and take up scarcely any space at all. If you ask permission, the cottagers have not the slightest objection to allowing you to watch them at their work, and when one sees how rapidly great lengths of striped material grow under the revolving metal framework, you wonder that Falaise is not able to supply the demands of the whole republic for this class of material.

Just by the Hotel de Ville and the church of La Trinite stands the imposing statue of William the Conqueror. He is mounted on the enormous war-horse of the period and the whole effect is strong and spirited. The most notable

feature of the exterior of the church of La Trinite is the curious passage-way that goes underneath the Lady Chapel behind the High Altar. The whole of the exterior is covered with rich carving, crocketed finials, innumerable gargoyles and the usual enriched mouldings of Gothic architecture. The charm of the interior is heightened if one enters in the twilight when vespers are proceeding. There is just sufficient light to show up the tracery of the windows and the massive pointed arches in the choir. A few candles burn by the altar beyond the dark mass of figures forming the congregation. A Gregorian chant fills the building with its solemn tones and the smoke of a swinging censer ascends in the shadowy chancel. Then, as the service proceeds, one candle above the altar seems to suddenly ignite the next, and a line of fire travels all over the great erection surrounding the figure of the Virgin, leaving in its trail a blaze of countless candles that throw out the details of the architecture in strong relief. Soon the collection is made, and as the priest passes round the metal dish, he is followed by the cocked-hatted official whose appearance is so surprising to those who are not familiar with French churches. As the priest passes the dish to each row the official brings his metal-headed staff down upon the pavement with a noisy bang that is calculated to startle the unwary into dropping their money anywhere else than in the plate. In time the bell rings beside the altar, and the priest robed in white and gold elevates the host before the kneeling congregation. Once more the man in the cocked hat becomes prominent as he steps into the open space between the transepts and tolls the big bell in the tower above. Then a smaller and much more cheerful bell is rung, and fearing the arrival of another collecting priest we slip out of the swinging doors into the twilight that has now almost been swallowed up in the gathering darkness.

The consecration of the splendid Norman church of St Gervais took place in the presence of Henry I. but there is nothing particularly English in any part of the exterior. The central tower has four tall and deeply recessed arches (the middle ones contain windows) on each side, giving a rich arcaded appearance. Above, rises a tall pointed roof ornamented with four odd-looking dormers near the apex. Every one remarks on their similarity to dovecots and one almost imagines that they must have been built as a place of shelter on stormy days for the great gilded cock that forms the weather vane. The nave is still Norman on the south side, plain round-headed windows lighting the clerestory, but the aisles were rebuilt in the flamboyant period and present a rich mass of ornament in contrast to the unadorned masonry of the nave. The western end until lately had to endure the indignity of having its wall surfaces largely hidden by shops and houses. These have now disappeared, but the stone-work has not been restored, and you may still see a section of the interior of the house that formerly used the west end of the south aisle as one of its walls. You can see where the staircases went, and you may notice also how wantonly these domestic builders cut away the buttresses and architectural enrichments to suit the convenience of their own needs.

As you go from the market-place along the street that runs from St Gervais to the suburb of Guibray, the shops on the left are exchanged for a low

wall over which you see deep, grassy hollows that come right up to the edge of the street. Two fine houses, white-shuttered and having the usual vacant appearance, stand on steep slopes surrounded by great cedars of Lebanon and a copper beech.

The church of Guibray is chiefly Norman—it is very white inside and there is some round-headed arcading in the aisles. The clustered columns of the nave have simple, pointed arches, and there is a carved marble altarpiece showing angels supporting the Virgin who is gazing upwards. The aisles of the chancel are restored Norman, and the stone-work is bright green just above the floor through the dampness that seems to have defied the efforts of the restorers.

CHAPTER VI

From Argentan to Avranches

Between tall poplars whose stems are splotted with grey lichen and whose feet are grown over with brownish-green moss, runs the road from Falaise to Argentan, straight and white, with scarcely more than the slightest bend, for the whole eight miles. It is typical of the roads in this part of the country and beyond the large stone four or five kilometres outside Falaise, marking the boundary between Calvados and Orne, and the railway which one passes soon afterwards, there is nothing to break the undulating monotony of the boundless plain.

We cannot all hope to have this somewhat dull stretch of country relieved by any exciting event, but I can remember one spring afternoon being overtaken by two mounted gendarmes in blue uniforms, galloping for their very lives. I looked down the road into the cloud of dust raised by the horses' hoofs, but the country on all sides lay calm and deserted, and I was left in doubt as to the reason for this astonishing haste. Half an hour afterwards a group of people appeared in the distance, and on approaching closer, they proved to be the two gendarmes leading their blown horses as they walked beside a picturesque group of apparently simple peasants, the three men wearing the typical soft, baggy cap and blue smock of the country folk. The little group had a gloomy aspect, which was explained when I noticed that the peasants were joined together by a bright steel chain. Evidently something was very much amiss with one of the peaceful villages lying near the road.

After a time, at the end of the long white perspective, appear the towers of the great church of St Germain that dominate the town where Henry II. was staying when he made that rash exclamation concerning his "turbulent priest." It was from Argentan that those four knights set out for England and Canterbury to carry out the deed, for which Henry lay in ashes for five

weeks in this very place. But there is little at the present time at Argentan to remind one that it is in any way associated with the murder of Becket. The castle that now exists is occupied by the Courts of Justice and was partially built in the Renaissance period. Standing close to it, is an exceedingly tall building with a great gable that suggests an ecclesiastical origin, and on looking a little closer one soon discovers blocked up Gothic windows and others from which the tracery has been hacked. This was the chapel of the castle which has been so completely robbed of its sanctity that it is now cut up into small lodgings, and in one of its diminutive shops, picture post-cards of the town are sold.

The ruins of the old castle are not very conspicuous, for in the seventeenth century the great keep was demolished. There is still a fairly noticeable round tower—the Tour Marguerite—which has a pointed roof above its corbels, or perhaps they should be called machicolations. In the Place Henri IV. stands a prominent building that projects over the pavement supported by massive pointed arches, and with this building in the foreground there is one of the best views of St Germain that one can find in the town. Just before coming to the clock that is suspended over the road by the porch of the church, there is a butcher's shop at the street corner that has a piece of oak carving preserved on account of its interest while the rest of the building has been made featureless with even plaster. The carving shows Adam and Eve standing on either side of a formal Tree of Life, and the butcher, who is pleased to find a stranger who notices this little curiosity, tells him with great pride that his house dates from the fifteenth century. The porch of St Germain is richly ornamented, but it takes a second place to the south porch of the church of Notre Dame at Louviers and may perhaps seem scarcely worthy of comment after St Maclou at Rouen. The structure as a whole was commenced in 1424, and the last portion of the work only dates from the middle of the seventeenth century. The vaulting of the nave has a very new and well-kept appearance and the side altars, in contrast to so many of even the large churches, are almost dignified in their somewhat restrained and classic style. The high altar is a stupendous erection of two storeys with Corinthian pillars. Nine long, white, pendant banners are conspicuous on the walls of the chancel. The great altars and the lesser ones that crowd the side chapels are subject to the accumulation of dirt as everything else in buildings sacred or lay, and at certain times of the day, a woman may be seen vigorously flapping the brass candlesticks and countless altar ornaments with a big feather broom. On the north side of the chancel some of the windows have sections of old painted glass, and in one of them there is part of a ship with men in crow's nests backed by clouds, a really vigorous colour scheme.

Keeping to the high ground, there is to the south of this church an open Place, and beyond it there are some large barracks, where, on the other side of a low wall may be seen the elaborately prepared steeple-chase for training soldiers to be able to surmount every conceivable form of obstacle. Awkward iron railings, wide ditches, walls of different composition and varying height are frequently scaled, and it is practice of this sort that has made the French soldier famous for the facility with

which he can storm fortifications. The river Orne finds its way through the lower part of the town and here there are to be found some of the most pleasing bits of antique domestic architecture. One of the quaintest of these built in 1616 is the galleried building illustrated here, and from a parallel street not many yards off there is a peep of a house that has been built right over the stream which is scarcely less picturesque.

[Illustration: A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY HOUSE AT ARGENTAN]

The church of St Martin is passed on entering Argentan from Falaise. Its east end crowds right up against the pavement and it is somewhat unusual to find the entrances at this portion of the building. The stained glass in the choir of St Martin is its most noticeable feature—the pictures showing various scenes in the life of Christ.

As in all French towns Argentan knows how to decorate on fete days. Coming out of the darkness of the church in the late twilight on one of these occasions, I discovered that the town had suddenly become festooned with a long perspective of arches stretching right away down the leafy avenue that goes out of the town—to the north in one direction, and to St Germain in the other. The arches were entirely composed without a single exception of large crimson-red Chinese lanterns. The effect was astonishingly good, but despite all the decoration, the townsfolk seemed determined to preserve the quiet of the Sabbath, and although there were crowds everywhere, the only noise that broke the stillness was that of the steam round-about that had been erected on a triangular patch of grass. The dark crowds of people illuminated by flaring lights stood in perfect quiet as they watched the great noisy mass of moving animals and boats, occupied almost entirely by children, keep up its perpetual dazzle and roar. The fair—for there were many side-shows—was certainly quieter than any I have witnessed in England.

A long, straight road, poplar-bordered and level, runs southwards from Argentan to Mortree, a village of no importance except for the fact that one must pass through it if one wishes to visit the beautiful Chateau d'O. This sixteenth century mansion like so many to be seen in this part of France, is in a somewhat pathetic state of disrepair, but as far as one may see from the exterior, it would not require any very great sum to completely restore the broken stone-work and other signs of decay. These, while perhaps adding to the picturesqueness of the buildings, do not bring out that aspect of carefully preserved antiquity which is the charm of most of the houses of this period in England. The great expanse of water in the moat is very green and covered by large tracts of weed, but the water is supplied by a spring, and fish thrive in it. The approach to the chateau across the moat leads to an arched entrance through which you enter the large courtyard overlooked on three sides by the richly ornamented buildings, the fourth side being only protected from the moat by a low wall. It would be hard to find a more charming spot than this with its views across the moat to the gardens beyond, backed by great masses of

foliage.

Going on past Mortree the main road will bring one after about eight miles to the old town of Alencon, which has been famed ever since the time of Louis XIV. for the lace which is even at the present day worked in the villages of this neighbourhood, more especially at the hamlet of Damigny. The cottagers use pure linen thread which is worth the almost incredible sum of 100 per lb. They work on parchment from patterns which are supplied by the merchants in Alencon. The women go on from early morning until the light fails, and earn something about a shilling per day!

The castle of Alencon, built by Henry I. in the twelfth century, was pulled down with the exception of the keep, by the order of Henry of Navarre, the famous contemporary of Queen Elizabeth. This keep is still in existence, and is now used as a prison. Near it is the Palais de Justice, standing where the other buildings were situated.

The west porch of the church of Notre Dame is richly ornamented with elaborate canopies, here and there with statues. One of these represents St John, and it will be seen that he is standing with his face towards the church. A legend states that this position was taken by the statue when the church was being ransacked by Protestants in the sixteenth century.

Another road from Argentan is the great *route nationale* that runs in a fairly direct line to Granville. As one rides out of the town there is a pretty view on looking back, of St Germain standing on the slight eminence above the Orne. Keeping along by that river the road touches it again at the little town of Ecouche. The old market hall standing on massive pillars, is the most attractive feature of the place. Its old tiled roof and half-timbered upper storey remind one forcibly of some of those fortunate old towns in England that have preserved this feature. The church has lost its original nave, and instead, there is a curious barn-like structure, built evidently with a view to economy, being scarcely more than half the height of the original: the vacant space has been very roughly filled up, and the numerous holes and crevices support a fine growth of weeds, and a strong young tree has also taken root in the ramshackle stone work. From the central tower, gargoyles grin above the elaborately carved buttresses and finials in remarkable contrast to the jerry-built addition.

[Illustration: THE OLD MARKET HOUSE AT ECOUCHE]

Passing through rich country, you leave the valley of the Orne, and on both sides of the road are spread wide and fascinating views over the orchard-clad country that disappears in the distant blue of the horizon. Wonderful patches of shadow, when large clouds are flying over the heavens, fall on this great tract of country and while in dull weather it may seem a little monotonous, in days of sunshine and shade it is full of a haunting beauty that is most remarkable.

About seven miles from Argentan one passes Fromentelle, a quiet hamlet

full

of thatched cottages and curious weathercocks, and then five miles further on, having descended into the valley of the little river Rouvre, Briouze is entered. Here there is a wide and very extensive market-place with another quaint little structure, smaller than the one at Ecouche, but having a curious bell-turret in the centre of the roof. On Monday, which is market day, Briouze presents a most busy scene, and there are plenty of opportunities of studying the genial looking country farmers, their wives, and the large carts in which they drive from the farms. In the midst of the booths, you may see a bronze statue commemorating the "Sapeurs, pompiers" and others of this little place who fell in 1854.

Leaving the main road which goes on to Flers, we may take the road to Domfront, which passes through three pretty villages and much pleasant country. Bellau, the first village, is full of quaint houses and charming old-world scenes. The church is right in the middle on an open space without an enclosure of any description. Standing with one's back to this building, there is a pretty view down the road leading to the south, a patch of blue distance appearing in the opening between the old gables. To all those who may wish to either paint or photograph this charming scene, I would recommend avoiding the hour in the afternoon when the children come out of school. I was commencing a drawing one sunny afternoon—it must have been about three o'clock—and the place seemed almost deserted. Indeed, I had been looking for a country group of peasants to fill the great white space of sunny road, when in twos and threes, the juvenile population flooded out towards me. For some reason which I could not altogether fathom, the boys arranged themselves in a long, regular line, occupying exactly one half of the view, the remaining space being filled by an equally long line of little girls. All my efforts failed to induce the children to break up the arrangement they had made. They merely altered their formation by advancing three or four paces nearer with almost military precision. They were still standing in their unbroken rows when I left the village.

Passing a curious roadside cross which bears the date 1741 and a long Latin inscription splashed over with lichen, one arrives at La Ferriere aux Etangs, a quaint village with a narrow and steep street containing one conspicuously old, timber-framed house. But it is scarcely necessary to point out individual cottages in this part of Normandy, for wherever one looks, the cottages are covered with thick, purply-grey thatch, and the walls below are of grey wooden framework, filled in with plaster, generally coloured a creamy-white. When there are deep shadows under the eaves and the fruit trees in blossom stand out against the dark thatch, one can easily understand how captivating is the rural charm of this part of Normandy. Gradually the road ascends, but no great views are apparent, although one is right above the beautiful valley of the Varennes, until quite near to Domfront. Then, suddenly there appears an enormous stretch of slightly undulating country to the south and west. As far as one can see, the whole land seems to be covered by one vast forest.

But though part of this is real forest-land, much of it is composed of orchards and hedgerow trees, which are planted so closely together that, at a short distance, they assume the aspect of close-growing woods. The first impression of the great stretch of forest-land does not lose its striking aspect, even when one has explored the whole of the town. The road that brings one into the old town runs along a ridge and after passing one of the remains of the old gateways, it rises slightly to the highest part of the mass of rock upon which Domfront is perched. The streets are narrow and parallel to accommodate themselves to the confined space within the walls. At the western end of the granite ridge, and separated from the town by a narrow defile, stands all that is left of the castle—a massive but somewhat shapeless ruin. At the western end of the ramparts, one looks down a precipitous descent to the river Varennes which has by some unusual agency, cut itself a channel through the rocky ridge if it did not merely occupy an existing gap. At the present time, besides the river, the road and railway pass through the narrow gorge.

The castle has one of those sites that appealed irresistibly to the warlike barons of the eleventh century. In this case it was William I., Duc de Belleme, who decided to raise a great fortress on this rock that he had every reason to believe would prove an impregnable stronghold, but although only built in 1011, it was taken by Duke William thirty-seven years later, being one of the first brilliant feats by which William the Norman showed his strength outside his own Duchy. A century or more later, Henry II., when at Domfront, received the pope's nuncio by whom a reconciliation was in some degree patched up between the king and Becket. Richard I. is known to have been at the castle at various times. In the sixteenth century, a most thrilling siege was conducted during the period when Catherine de Medicis was controlling the throne. A Royalist force, numbering some seven or eight thousand horse and foot, surrounded this formidable rock which was defended by the Calvinist Comte de Montgommery. With him was another Protestant, Ambroise le Balafre, who had made himself a despot at Domfront, but whose career was cut short by one of Montgommery's men with whom he had quarrelled. They buried him in the little church of Notre-Dame-sur-l'Eau—the wonderfully preserved Norman building that one sees beneath one's feet when standing on the ramparts of the castle. The body, however, was not long allowed to remain there, for when the royal army surrounded the castle they brought out the corpse and hung it in a conspicuous place to annoy the besieged. Like Corfe Castle in England, and many other magnificently fortified strongholds, Domfront was capable of defence by a mere handful. In this case the original garrison consisted of one hundred and fifty, and after many desertions the force was reduced to less than fifty. A great breach had been made by the six pieces of artillery placed on the hill on the opposite side of the gorge, and through this the besiegers endeavoured to enter. The attenuated garrison, with magnificent courage, held the breach after a most desperate and bloody fight. But after all this display of courage, it was found impossible to continue the defence, for by the next morning there were barely more than a dozen men left to fight. Finally Montgommery was obliged to surrender unconditionally, and not long afterwards he was executed in Paris. You may

see the breach where this terrible fight took place at the present day, and as you watch the curious effects of the blue shadows falling among the forest trees that stretch away towards the south, you may feel that you are looking over almost the same scene that was gazed upon by the notable figures in history who have made their exits and entrances at Domfront.

So little has the church of Notre-Dame-sur-l'Eau altered in its appearance since it was built by the Duc de Belleme that, were he to visit the ruins of his castle, he would marvel no doubt that the men of the nine centuries which have passed, should have consistently respected this sturdy little building. There are traces of aisles having existed, but otherwise the exterior of the church can have seen no change at all in this long period. Inside, however, the crude whitewash, the curious assemblage of enormous seventeenth century gravestones that are leant against the walls, and the terribly jarring almost life-sized crucifix, all give one that feeling of revulsion that is inseparable from an ill-kept place of worship. On the banks of the river outside, women may be seen washing clothes; the sounds of the railway come from the station near by, and overhead, rising above the foliage at its feet, are the broken walls and shattered keep from which we have been gazing.

[Illustration: ONE OF THE TOWERS IN THE WALLS OF DOMFRONT]

The walls of the town, punctuated by many a quaint tower, have lost their fearsome aspect owing to the domestic uses to which the towers are palpably devoted. One of them appears in the adjoining illustration, and it is typical of the half-dozen or so that still rise above the pretty gardens that are perched along the steep ascent. But though Domfront is full of almost thrilling suggestions of medievalism and the glamour of an ancient town, yet there is a curious lack of picturesque arrangement, so that if one were to be led away by the totally uninteresting photographs that may be seen in the shops, one would miss one of the most unique spots in Normandy.

Stretching away towards Flers, there is a tract of green country all ups and downs, but with no distant views except the peep of Domfront that appears a few miles north of the town. Crowning the ridge of the hill is the keep of the castle, resembling a closed fist with the second finger raised, and near it, the bell-cote of the Palais de Justice and the spire of the church break the line of the old houses. Ferns grow by the roadside on every bank, but the cottages and farms are below the average of rustic beauty that one soon demands in this part of France.

Flers is a somewhat busy manufacturing town where cotton and thread mills have robbed the place of its charm. At first sight one might imagine the church which bears the date 1870 was of considerably greater age, but inside one is almost astounded at the ramshackle galleries, the white-washed roof of rough boards discoloured by damp, and the general squalor of the place relieved only by a ponderous altar-piece of classic design. The castle is still in good preservation

but although it dates from early Norman times, it is chiefly of the sixteenth century.

Out in the country again, going westwards, the cottage industry of weaving is apparent in nearly every cottage one sees. The loud click-a-ti-clack–click-a-ti-clack of the looms can be heard on every side as one passes such villages as Landisacq. Everywhere the scenery is exceedingly English, the steep hillsides are often covered with orchards, and the delicate green of the apple-trees in spring-time, half-smothered in pinky-white blossom, gives the country a garden-like aspect. You may see a man harrowing a field on a sudden slope with a cloud of dust blowing up from the dry light soil, and you may hear him make that curious hullabalooing by which the peasants direct their horses, so different from the grunting "way-yup there" of the English ploughman. Coming down a long descent, a great stretch of country to the north that includes the battlefield of Tinchebrai comes into view. It is hard to associate the rich green pastures, smiling orchards, and peaceful cattle, with anything so gruesome as a battle between armies led by brothers. But it was near the little town of Tinchebrai that the two brothers, Henry I., King of England, and Robert Duke of Normandy fought for the possession of Normandy. Henry's army was greatly superior to that of his brother, for he had the valuable help of the Counts of Conches, Breteuil, Thorigny, Mortagne, Montfort, and two or three others as powerful. But despite all this array, the battle for some time was very considerably in Robert's favour, and it was only when Henry, heavily pressed by his brother's brilliant charge, ordered his reserves to envelop the rear, that the great battle went in favour of the English king. Among the prisoners were Robert and his youthful son William, the Counts of Mortain, Estouteville, Ferrieres, and a large number of notable men. Until his death, twenty-seven years later, Henry kept his brother captive in Cardiff Castle, and it has been said that, owing to an effort to escape, Henry was sufficiently lacking in all humane feelings towards his unfortunate brother, to have both his eyes put out. It seems a strange thing that exactly sixty years after the battle of Hastings, a Norman king of England, should conquer the country which had belonged to his father.

The old church of St Remy at Tinchebrai, part of which dates from the twelfth century, has been abandoned for a new building, but the inn—the Hotel Lion d'Or—which bears the date 1614, is still in use. Vire, however, is only ten miles off, and its rich mediaeval architecture urges us forward.

Standing in the midst of the cobbled street, there suddenly appears right ahead a splendid thirteenth century gateway—the Tour de l'Horloge—that makes one of the richest pictures in Normandy. It is not always one can see the curious old tower thrown up by a blaze of gold in the west, but those who are fortunate enough to see such an effect may get a small suggestion of the scene from the illustration given here. The little painted figure of the Virgin and Child stands in a niche just over the arch, and by it

appears the prayer "Marie protege la ville!"

One of the charms of Vire is its cleanliness, for I can recall no unpleasant smells having interfered with the pleasure of exploring the old streets. There is a great market on the northern side of the town, open and breezy. It slopes clear away without any intervening buildings to a great expanse of green wooded country, suggestive of some of the views that lie all around one at Avranches. The dark old church of Notre Dame dates mainly from the twelfth century. Houses and small shops are built up against it between the buttresses in a familiar, almost confidential manner, and on the south side, the row of gargoyles have an almost humorous appearance. The drips upon the pavement and shops below were evidently a nuisance, and rain water-spouts, with plain pipes leading diagonally from them, have been attached to each grotesque head, making it seem that the grinning monsters have developed a great and unquenchable thirst. Inside, the church is dark and impressive. There are double rows of pillars in the aisles, and a huge crucifix hangs beneath the tower, thrown up darkly against the chancel, which is much painted and gilded. The remains of the great castle consist of nothing more than part of the tall keep, built eight hundred years ago, and fortunately not entirely destroyed when the rest of the castle came down by the order of Cardinal Richelieu. An exploration of the quaint streets of Vire will reveal two or three ancient gateways, many gabled houses, some of which are timber-framed visually, and most of them are the same beneath their skins of plaster. The houses in one of the streets are connected with the road by a series of wooden bridges across the river, which there forms one of the many pictures to be found in Vire.

Mortain is separated from Vire by fifteen miles of exceedingly hilly country, and those who imagine that all the roads in Normandy are the flat and poplar bordered ones that are so often encountered, should travel along this wonderful switch-back. As far as Sourdeval there seems scarcely a yard of level ground—it is either a sudden ascent or a breakneck rush into a trough-like depression. You pass copices of firs and beautiful woods, although in saying beautiful it is in a limited sense, for one seldom finds the really rich woodlands that are so priceless an ornament to many Surrey and Kentish lanes. The road is shaded by tall trees when it begins to descend into the steep rocky gorge of the Cance with its tumbling waterfalls that are a charming feature of this approach to Mortain. High upon the rocks on the left appears an enormous gilded statue of the Virgin, in the grounds of the Abbaye Blanche. Going downwards among the broken sunlight and shadows on the road, Mortain appears, picturesquely perched on a great rocky steep, and in the opening of the valley a blue haze suggests the great expanse of level country towards the south. The big parish church of the town was built originally in 1082 by that Robert of Mortain, who, it will be remembered, was one of the first of the Normans to receive from the victorious William a grant of land in England. The great tower which stands almost detached on the south-west side is remarkable for its enormously tall slit windows, for they run nearly from the ground to the saddle-back roof. The interior of this church is somewhat unusual, the nave and chancel being structurally one, and the aisles are separated by twenty-four

circular grey pillars with Corinthian capitals. The plain surfaces of the walls and vaulting are absolutely clean white, picked out with fine black lines to represent stone-work—a scarcely successful treatment of such an interior! On either side of the High Altar stand two great statues representing St Guillaume and St Evroult.

To those who wish to "do" all the sights of Mortain there is the Chapel of St Michael, which stands high up on the margin of a great rocky hill, but the building having been reconstructed about fifty years ago, the chief attraction to the place is the view, which in tolerably clear weather, includes Mont St Michel towards which we are making our way.

A perfectly straight and fairly level stretch of road brings you to St Hilaire-du-Harcout. On the road one passes two or three large country houses with their solemn and perfectly straight avenues leading directly up to them at right angles from the road. The white jalousies seem always closed, the grass on the lawns seems never cut, and the whole establishments have a pathetically deserted appearance to the passer-by. A feature of this part of the country can scarcely be believed without actually using one's eyes. It is the wooden chimney-stack, covered with oak shingles, that surmounts the roofs of most of the cottages. Where the shingles have fallen off, the cement rubble that fills the space between the oak framing appears, but it is scarcely credible that, even with this partial protection, these chimneys should have survived so many centuries. I have asked the inmates of some of the cottages whether they ever feared a fire in their chimneys, but they seemed to consider the question as totally unnecessary, for some providence seems to have watched over their frail structures.

St Hilaire has a brand new church and nothing picturesque in its long, almost monotonous, street. Instead of turning aside at Pontaubault towards Mont St Michel, we will go due north from that hamlet to the beautifully situated Avranches. This prosperous looking town used, at one time, to have a large English colony, but it has recently dwindled to such small dimensions that the English chaplain has an exceedingly small parish. The streets seem to possess a wonderful cleanliness; all the old houses appear to have made way for modern buildings which, in a way, give Avranches the aspect of a watering-place, but its proximity to the sea is more apparent in a map than when one is actually in the town. On one side of the great place in front of the church of Notre Dame des Champs is the Jardin des Plantes. To pass from the blazing sunshine and loose gravel, to the dense green shade of the trees in this delightful retreat is a pleasure that can be best appreciated on a hot afternoon in summer. The shade, however, and the beds of flowers are not the only attractions of these gardens. Their greatest charm is the wonderful view over the shining sands and the glistening waters of the rivers See and Selune that, at low tide, take their serpentine courses over the delicately tinted waste of sand that occupies St Michael's Bay. Out beyond the little wooded promontory that protects the mouth of the See, lies Mont St Michel, a fretted silhouette of flat pearly grey, and a little to the north is Tombelaine, a less

pretentious islet in this fairyland sea. Framed by the stems and foliage of the trees, this view is one of the most fascinating in Normandy. One would be content to stay here all through the sultry hours of a summer day, to listen to the distant hum of conversation among white-capped nursemaids, as they sew busily, giving momentary attention to their charges. But Avranches has an historical spot that no student of history, and indeed no one who cares anything for the picturesque events that crowd the pages of the chronicles of England in the days of the Norman kings, may miss. It is the famous stone upon which Henry II. knelt when he received absolution for the murder of Becket at the hands of the papal legate. To reach this stone is, for a stranger, a matter of some difficulty. From the Place by the Jardin des Plantes, it is necessary to plunge down a steep descent towards the railway station, and then one climbs a series of zigzag paths on a high grassy bank that brings one out upon the Place Huet. In one corner, surrounded by chains and supported by low iron posts, is the historic stone. It is generally thickly coated with dust, but the brass plate affixed to a pillar of the doorway is quite legible. These, and a few fragments of carved stone that lie half-smothered in long grass and weeds at a short distance from the railed-in stone, are all that remain of the cathedral that existed in the time of Henry II.

It must have been an impressive scene on that Sunday in May 1172, when the papal legate, in his wonderful robes, stood by the north transept door, of which only this fragment remains, and granted absolution to the sovereign, who, kneeling in all humbleness and submission, was relieved of the curse of excommunication which had been laid on him after the tragic affair in the sanctuary at Canterbury. In place of the splendid cathedral, whose nave collapsed, causing the demolition of the whole building in 1799, there is a new church with the two great western towers only carried up to half the height intended for them.

From the roadway that runs along the side of the old castle walls in terrace fashion there is another wonderful view of rich green country, through which, at one's feet, winds the river See. Away towards the north-west the road to Granville can be seen passing over the hills in a perfectly straight line. But this part of the country may be left for another chapter.

CHAPTER VII

Concerning Mont St Michel

So, when their feet were planted on the plain
That broaden'd toward the base of Camelot,
Far off they saw the silver-misty morn

Rolling her smoke about the Royal mount,
That rose between the forest and the field.
At times the summit of the high city flash'd;
At times the spires and turrets half-way down
Pricked through the mist; at times the great gate shone
Only, that open'd on the field below:
Anon, the whole fair city disappeared.

Tennyson's *Gareth and Lynette*.

"The majestic splendour of this gulf, its strategic importance, have at all times attracted the attention of warriors." In this quaint fashion commences the third chapter of a book upon Mont St Michel which is to be purchased in the little town. We have already had a glimpse of the splendour of the gulf from Avranches, but there are other aspects of the rock which are equally impressive. They are missed by all those who, instead of going by the picturesque and winding coast-road from Pontaubault, take the straight and dusty *route nationale* to Pontorson, and then turn to follow the tramway that has in recent years been extended along the causeway to the mount itself. If one can manage to make it a rather late ride along the coast-road just mentioned, many beautiful distant views of Mont St Michel, backed by sunset lights, will be an ample reward. Even on a grey and almost featureless evening, when the sea is leaden-hued, there may, perhaps, appear one of those thin crimson lines that are the last efforts of the setting sun. This often appears just behind the grey and dim rock, and the crimson is reflected in a delicate tinge upon the glistening sands. Tiny rustic villages, with churches humble and unobtrusive, and prominent calvaries, are passed one after the other. At times the farmyards seem to have taken the road into their own hands, for a stone well-head will appear almost in the roadway, and chickens, pigs, and a litter of straw have to be allowed for by those who ride or drive along this rural way. When the rock is still some distance off, the road seems to determine to take a short cut across the sands, but thinking better of it, it runs along the outer margin of the reclaimed land, and there is nothing to prevent the sea from flooding over the road at its own discretion. Once on the broad and solidly constructed causeway, the rock rapidly gathers in bulk and detail. It has, indeed, as one approaches, an almost fantastic and fairy-like outline. Then as more and more grows from the hazy mass, one sees that this remarkable place has a crowded and much embattled loneliness. Two round towers, sturdy and boldly machicolated, appear straight ahead, but oddly enough the wall between them has no opening of any sort, and the stranger is perplexed at the inhospitable curtain-wall that seems to refuse him admittance to the mediaeval delights within. It almost heightens the impression that the place belongs altogether to dreamland, for in that shadowy world all that is most desirable is so often beyond the reach of the dreamer. It is a very different impression that one gains if the steam train has been taken, for its arrival is awaited by a small crowd of vulture-like servants and porters from the hotels. The little crowd treats the incoming train-load of tourists as its carrion, and one has no time to notice whether there is a

gateway or not before being swept along the sloping wooden staging that leads to the only entrance. The simple archway in the outer wall leads into the Cour de l'Avancee where those two great iron cannons, mentioned in an earlier chapter, are conspicuous objects. They were captured by the heroic garrison when the English, in 1433, made their last great effort to obtain possession of the rock. Beyond these, one passes through the barbican to the Cour de la Herse, which is largely occupied by the Hotel Poulard Aine. Then one passes through the Porte du Roi, and enters the town proper. The narrow little street is flanked by many an old house that has seen most of the vicissitudes that the little island city has suffered. In fact many of these shops which are now almost entirely given over to the sale of mementoes and books of photographs of the island, are individually of great interest. One of the most ancient in the upper part of the street, is pointed out as that occupied in the fourteenth century by Tiphane de Raguenel, the wife of the heroic Bertrand du Guesclin.

It is almost impossible for those who are sensitive in such matters, not to feel some annoyance at the pleasant but persistent efforts of the vendors of souvenirs to induce every single visitor to purchase at each separate shop. To get an opportunity for closely examining the carved oaken beams and architectural details of the houses, one must make at least some small purchase at each trinket store in front of which one is inclined to pause. Perhaps it would even be wise before attempting to look at anything architectural in this quaintest of old-world streets, to go from one end to the other, buying something of trifling cost, say a picture postcard, from each saleswoman. In this way, one might purchase immunity from the over-solicitous shop-keepers, and have the privilege of being able to realise the mediaeval character of the place without constant interruptions.

Nearly every visitor to Mont St Michel considers that this historic gem, in its wonderful setting of opalescent sand, can be "done" in a few hours. They think that if they climb up the steps to the museum—a new building made more conspicuous than it need be by a board bearing the word "Musée" in enormous letters—if they walk along the ramparts, stare for a moment at the gateways, and then go round the abbey buildings with one of the small crowds that the guide pilots through the maze of extraordinary vaulted passages and chambers, that they have done ample justice to this world-famous sight. If the rock had only one-half of its historic and fantastically arranged buildings, it would still deserve considerably more than this fleeting attention paid to it by such a large proportion of the tourists. So many of these poor folk come to Mont St Michel quite willing to learn the reasons for its past greatness, but they do not bring with them the smallest grains of knowledge. The guides, whose knowledge of English is limited to such words as "Sirteenth Senchury" (thirteenth century), give them no clues to the reasons for the existence of any buildings on the island, and quite a large proportion of visitors go away without any more knowledge than they could have obtained from the examination of a good book of photographs.

To really appreciate in any degree the natural charms of Mont St Michel, at least one night should be spent on the rock. Having debated between the rival houses of Poularde Aine and Poularde Jeune, and probably decided on the older branch of the family, perhaps with a view to being able to speak of their famous omelettes with enthusiasm, one is conducted to one of the houses or dependences connected with the hotel. If one has selected the Maison Rouge, it is necessary to make a long climb to one's bedroom. The long *salle a manger*, where dinner is served, is in a tall wedge-like building just outside the *Porte du Roi* and in the twilight of evening coffee can be taken on the little tables of the cafe that overflows on to the pavement of the narrow street. The cafe faces the head-quarters of the hotel, and is as much a part of it as any of the other buildings which contain the bedrooms. To the stranger it comes as a surprise to be handed a Chinese lantern at bedtime, and to be conducted by one of the hotel servants almost to the top of the tall house just mentioned. Suddenly the man opens a door and you step out into an oppressive darkness. Here the use of the Chinese lantern is obvious, for without some artificial light, the long series of worn stone steps, that must be climbed before reaching the Maison Rouge, would offer many opportunities for awkward falls. The bedrooms in this house, when one has finally reached a floor far above the little street, have a most enviable position. They are all provided with small balconies where the enormous sweep of sand or glistening ocean, according to the condition of the tides, is a sight which will drag the greatest sluggard from his bed at the first hour of dawn. Right away down below are the hoary old houses of the town, hemmed in by the fortified wall that surrounds this side of the island. Then stretching away towards the greeny-blue coast-line is the long line of digue or causeway on which one may see a distant puff of white smoke, betokening the arrival of the early train of the morning. The attaches of the rival hotels are already awaiting the arrival of the early batch of sight-seers. All over the delicately tinted sands there are constantly moving shadows from the light clouds forming over the sea, and blowing freshly from the west there comes an invigorating breeze.

Before even the museum can have a real interest for us, we must go back to the early times when Mont St Michel was a bare rock; when it was not even an island, and when the bay of Mont St Michel was covered by the forest of Scissey.

It seems that the Romans raised a shrine to Jupiter on the rock, which soon gave to it the name of Mons Jovis, afterwards to be contracted into Mont-Jou. They had displaced some earlier Druidical or other sun-worshippers who had carried on their rites at this lonely spot; but the Roman innovation soon became a thing of the past and the Franks, after their conversion to Christianity, built on the rock two oratories, one to St Stephen and the other to St Symphorian. It was then that the name Mont-Jou was abandoned in favour of Mons-Tumba. The smaller rock, now known as Tombelaine, was called Tumbella meaning the little tomb, to distinguish it from the larger rock. It is not known why the two rocks should have been

associated with the word tomb, and it is quite possible that the Tumba may simply mean a small hill.

In time, hermits came and built their cells on both the rocks and gradually a small community was formed under the Merovingian Abbey of Mandane.

It was about this time, that is in the sixth century, that a great change came over the surroundings of the two rocks. Hitherto, they had formed rocky excrescences at the edge of the low forest-land by which the country adjoining the sea was covered. Gradually the sea commenced a steady encroachment. It had been probably in progress even since Roman times, but its advance became more rapid, and after an earthquake, which occurred in the year 709, the whole of the forest of Scissey was invaded, and the remains of the trees were buried under a great layer of sand. There were several villages in this piece of country, some of whose names have been preserved, and these suffered complete destruction with the forest. A thousand years afterwards, following a great storm and a consequent movement of the sand, a large number of oaks and considerable traces of the little village St Etienne de Paluel were laid bare. The foundations of houses, a well, and the font of a church were among the discoveries made. Just about the time of the inundation, we come to the interesting story of the holy-minded St Aubert who had been made bishop of Avranches. He could see the rock as it may be seen to-day, although at that time it was crowned with no buildings visible at any distance, and the loneliness of the spot seems to have attracted him to retire thither for prayer and meditation. He eventually raised upon the rock a small chapel which he dedicated to Michel the archangel. After this time, all the earlier names disappeared and the island was always known as Mont St Michel. Replacing the hermits of Mandane with twelve canons, the establishment grew and became prosperous. That this was so, must be attributed largely to the astonishing miracles which were supposed to have taken place in connection with the building of the chapel. Two great rocks near the top of the mount, which were much in the way of the builders, were removed and sent thundering down the rocky precipice by the pressure of a child's foot when all the efforts of the men to induce the rock to move had been unavailing. The huge rock so displaced is now crowned by the tiny chapel of St Aubert. The offerings brought by the numerous pilgrims to Mont St Michel gave the canons sufficient means to commence the building of an abbey, and the unique position of the rock soon made it a refuge for the Franks of the western parts of Neustria when the fierce Norman pirates were harrying the country. In this way the village of Mont St Michel made its appearance at the foot of the rock. The contact of the canons with this new population brought some trouble in its wake. The holy men became contaminated with the world, and Richard, Duke of Normandy, replaced them by thirty Benedictines brought from Mont-Cassin. These monks were given the power of electing their own abbot who was invested with the most entire control over all the affairs of the people who dwelt upon the rock. This system of popular election seems to have worked admirably, for in the centuries that followed, the rulers of the community were generally men of remarkable character and great ideals.

About fifty years before the Conquest of England by Duke William, the abbot of that time, Hildebert II., commenced work on the prodigious series of buildings that still crown the rock. His bold scheme of building massive walls round the highest point, in order to make a lofty platform whereon to raise a great church, was a work of such magnitude that when he was gathered to his fathers the foundations were by no means complete. Those who came after him however, inspired by the great idea, kept up the work of building with wonderful enthusiasm. Slowly, year by year, the ponderous walls of the crypts and undercrofts grew in the great space which it was necessary to fill. Dark, irregularly built chambers, one side formed of the solid rock and the others composed of the almost equally massive masonry, grouped themselves round the unequal summit of the mount, until at last, towards the end of the eleventh century, the building of the nave of the church was actually in progress. Roger II., the eleventh of the abbots, commenced the buildings that preceded the extraordinary structure known as La Merveille. Soon after came Robert de Torigny, a pious man of great learning, who seems to have worked enthusiastically. He raised two great towers joined by a porch, the hostelry and infirmary on the south side and other buildings on the west. Much of this work has unfortunately disappeared. Torigny's coffin was discovered in 1876 under the north-west part of the great platform, and one may see a representation of the architect-abbot in the clever series of life-like models that have been placed in the museum.

The Bretons having made a destructive attack upon the mount in the early years of the thirteenth century and caused much damage to the buildings, Jourdain the abbot of that time planned out "La Merveille," which comprises three storeys of the most remarkable Gothic halls. At the bottom are the cellar and almonry, then comes the Salle des Chevaliers and the dormitory, and above all are the beautiful cloisters and the refectory. Jourdain, however, only lived to see one storey completed, but his successors carried on the work and Raoul de Villedieu finished the splendid cloister in 1228.

Up to this time the island was defenceless, but during the abbatiates of Toustain the ramparts and fortifications were commenced. In 1256 the buildings known as Belle-Chaise were constructed. They contained the entrance to the abbey before the chatelet made its appearance. After Toustain came Pierre le Roy who built a tower behind Belle-Chaise and also the imposing-looking chatelet which contains the main entrance to the whole buildings. The fortifications that stood outside this gateway have to some extent disappeared, but what remain are shown in the accompanying illustration.

In the early part of the fifteenth century, the choir of the church collapsed, but peace having been declared with England, soon afterwards D'Estouteville was able to construct the wonderful foundations composed of ponderous round columns called the crypt of les Gros-Piliers, and above it there afterwards appeared the splendid Gothic choir. The flamboyant tracery

of the windows is filled with plain green leaded glass, and the fact that the recent restoration has left the church absolutely bare of any ecclesiastical paraphernalia gives one a splendid opportunity of studying this splendid work of the fifteenth century. The nave of the church has still to undergo the process of restoration, for at the present time the fraudulent character of its stone-vaulted roof is laid bare by the most casual glance, for at the unfinished edge adjoining the choir one may see the rough lath and plaster which for a long time must have deceived the visitors who have gazed at the lofty roof. The western end of the building is an eighteenth century work, although to glance at the great patches of orange-coloured lichen that spread themselves over so much of the stone-work, it would be easy to imagine that the work was of very great antiquity. In earlier times there were some further bays belonging to the nave beyond the present west front in the space now occupied by an open platform. There is a fine view from this position, but it is better still if one climbs the narrow staircase from the choir leading up to the asphalted walk beneath the flying buttresses.

About the middle of the fourteenth century, Tiphaine de Ragueneil, the wife of Bertrand du Guesclin, that splendid Breton soldier, came from Pontorson and made her home at Mont St Michel, in order not to be kept as a prisoner by the English. There are several facts recorded that throw light on the character of this noble lady, sometimes spoken of as "The Fair Maid of Dinan." She had come to admire Du Guesclin for his prowess in military matters, and her feeling towards him having deepened, she had no hesitation in accepting his offer of marriage. It appears that Du Guesclin after this most happy event—for from all we are able to discover Tiphaine seems to have shared his patriotic ideals—was inclined to remain at home rather than to continue his gallant, though at times almost hopeless struggle against the English. Although it must have been a matter of great self-renunciation on her part, Tiphaine felt that it would be much against her character for her to have any share in keeping her husband away from the scene of action, and by every means in her power she endeavoured to re-animate his former enthusiasm. In this her success was complete, and resuming his great responsibilities in the French army, much greater success attended him than at any time in the past. Du Guesclin was not a martyr, but he is as much the most striking figure of the fourteenth century as Joan of Arc is of the fifteenth.

All through the period of anxiety through which the defenders of the mount had to pass when the Hundred Years' War was in progress, Mont St Michel was very largely helped against sudden attacks by the remarkable vigilance of their great watch-dogs. So valuable for the safety of the Abbey and the little town were these dogs considered that Louis XI. in 1475 allowed the annual sum of twenty-four pounds by Tours-weight towards their keep. The document states that "from the earliest times it has been customary to have and nourish, at the said place, a certain number of great dogs, which are tied up by day, and at night brought outside the enclosure to keep watch till morning." It was during the reign of this same Louis that the military order of chivalry of St Michael was instituted. The king made three

pilgrimages to the mount and the first chapter of this great order, which was for a long time looked upon as the most distinguished in France, was held in the Salle des Chevaliers.

For a long while Tombelaine, which lies so close to Mont St Michel, was in the occupation of the English, but in the account of the recovery of Normandy from the English, written by Jacques le Bouvier, King of Arms to Charles VII., we find that the place surrendered very easily to the French. We are told that the fortress of Tombelaine was "An exceedingly strong place and impregnable so long as the persons within it have provisions." The garrison numbered about a hundred men. They were allowed to go to Cherbourg where they took ship to England about the same time as the garrisons from Vire, Avranches, Coutances, and many other strongholds which were at this time falling like dead leaves. Le Bouvier at the end of his account of this wonderful break-up of the English fighting force in Normandy, tells us that the whole of the Duchy of Normandy with all the cities, towns, and castles was brought into subjection to the King of France within one year and six days. "A very wonderful thing," he remarks, "and it plainly appears that our Lord God therein manifested His grace, for never was so large a country conquered in so short a time, nor with the loss of so few people, nor with less injury, which is a great merit, honour and praise to the King of France."

In the early part of the sixteenth century, Mont St Michel seems to have reached the high-water mark of its glories. After this time a decline commenced and Cardinal le Veneur reduced the number of monks to enlarge his own income. This new cardinal was the first of a series not chosen from the residents on the mount, for after 1523 the system of election among themselves which had answered so well, was abandoned, and this wealthy establishment became merely one of the coveted preferments of the Church. There was no longer that enthusiasm for maintaining and continuing the architectural achievements of the past, for this new series of ecclesiastics seemed to look upon their appointment largely as a sponge which they might squeeze.

In Elizabethan times Mont St Michel once more assumed the character of a fortress and had to defend itself against the Huguenots when its resources had been drained by these worldly-minded shepherds, and it is not surprising to find that the abbey which had withstood all the attacks of the English during the Hundred Years' War should often fall into the hands of the protestant armies, although in every case it was re-taken.

A revival of the religious tone of the abbey took place early in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, when twelve Benedictine monks from St Maur were installed in the buildings. Pilgrimages once more became the order of the day, but since the days of Louis XI. part of the sub-structure of the abbey buildings had been converted into fearful dungeons, and the day came when the abbey became simply a most remarkable prison. In the time of Louis XV., a Frenchman named Dubourg—a person who has often been spoken

of as though he had been a victim of his religious convictions, but who seems to have been really a most reprehensible character—was placed in a wooden cage in one of the damp and gruesome vaults beneath the abbey. Dubourg had been arrested for his libellous writings concerning the king and many important persons in the French court. He existed for a little over a year in the fearful wooden cage, and just before he died he went quite mad, being discovered during the next morning half-eaten by rats. A realistic representation of his ghastly end is given in the museum, but one must not imagine that the grating filling the semi-circular arch is at all like the actual spot where the wretched man lay. The cage itself was composed of bars of wood placed so closely together that Dubourg was not able to put more than his fingers between them. The space inside was only about eight feet high and the width was scarcely greater. The cage itself was placed in a position where moisture dripped on to the miserable prisoner's body, and we can only marvel that he survived this fearful torture for so many months. During the French Revolution the abbey was nothing more than a jail, and it continued to be devoted to this base use until about forty years ago. Since that time, restoration has continued almost unceasingly, for in the prison period nothing was done to maintain the buildings, and there is still much work in hand which the French government who are now in control are most successfully carrying out.

These are a few of the thrilling phases of the history of the rock. But what has been written scarcely does the smallest justice to its crowded pages. The only way of being fair to a spot so richly endowed with enthralling events seems to be in stirring the imagination by a preliminary visit, in order that one may come again armed with a close knowledge of all that has taken place since Aubert raised his humble chapel upon the lonely rock. Who does not know that sense of annoyance at being conducted over some historic building by a professional guide who mentions names and events that just whet the appetite and then leave a hungry feeling for want of any surrounding details or contemporary events which one knows would convert the mere "sight" into holy ground. I submit that a French guide, a French hand-book or a poor translation, can do little to relieve this hunger, that Mont St Michel is fully worthy of some preliminary consideration, and that it should not be treated to the contemptuous scurry of a day's trip.

The tides that bring the sea across the great sweep of sand surrounding Mont St Michel, are intermittent, and it is possible to remain for a day or two on the island and be able to walk around it dry-shod at any hour. It is only at the really high tides that the waters of the Bay of Cancale give visitors the opportunity of seeing the fantastic buildings reflected in the sea. But although it is safer and much more pleasant to be able to examine every aspect of the rock from a boat, it is possible to walk over the sands and get the same views provided one is aware of the dangers of the quicksands which have claimed too many victims. It is somewhat terrifying that on what appears to be absolutely firm sand, a few taps of the foot will convert two or three yards beneath one's feet into a quaking mass. There is, however, no great danger at the foot of the rocks or

fortifications, but to wander any distance away entails the gravest risks unless in company with a native who is fully aware of any dangerous localities. The sands are sufficiently firm to allow those who know the route to drive horses and carts to Tombelaine, but this should not encourage strangers to take any chances, for the fate of the English lady who was swallowed up by the sands in sight of the ramparts and whose body now lies in the little churchyard of the town, is so distressing that any repetition of such tragedies would tend to cast a shade over the glories of the mount.

You may buy among the numerous photographs and pictures for sale in the trinket shops, coloured post-cards which show flaming sunsets behind the abbey, but nothing that I have yet seen does the smallest justice to the reality. Standing on the causeway and looking up to the great height of the tower that crowns the highest point, the gilded St Michael with his outspread wings seems almost ready to soar away into the immensity of the canopy of heaven. Through the traceried windows of the chancel of the church, the evening light on the opposite side of the rock glows through the green glass, for from this position the upper windows are opposite to one another and the light passes right through the building. The great mass of curiously simple yet most striking structures that girdle the summit of the rock and form the platform beneath the church, though built at different times, have joined in one consenscence and now present the appearance of one of those cities that dwell in the imagination when reading of "many tower'd Camelot" or the turreted walls of fairyland. Down below these great and inaccessible buildings comes an almost perpendicular drop of rocks, bare except for stray patches of grass or isolated bushes that have taken root in crevices. Then between this and the fortified wall, with its circular bastions, encircling the base of the rock, the roofs of the little town are huddled in picturesque confusion. The necessity of accommodating the modern pilgrims has unfortunately led to the erection of one or two houses that in some measure jar with their mediaeval surroundings. Another unwelcome note is struck by the needlessly aggressive board on the museum which has already been mentioned. However, when a sunset is glowing behind the mount, these modern intrusions are subdued into insignificance, and there is nothing left to disturb the harmony of the scene.

A walk round the ramparts reveals an endless series of picturesque groupings of the old houses with their time-worn stone walls, over which tower the chatelet and La Merveille. Long flights of stone steps from the highest part of the narrow street lead up to the main entrance of the abbey buildings. Here, beneath the great archway of the chatelet, sits an old blind woman who is almost as permanent a feature as the masonry on which she sits. Ascending the wide flight of steps, the Salle des Gardes is reached. It is in the lower portion of the building known as Belle-Chaise, mentioned earlier in this chapter. From this point a large portion of the seemingly endless series of buildings are traversed by the visitor, who is conducted by a regular guide. You ascend a great staircase, between massive stone walls spanned by two bridges, the first a strongly built structure of

stone, the next a slighter one of wood, and then reach a breezy rampart where great views over the distant coasts spread themselves out. From here you enter the church, its floor now littered with the debris of restoration. Then follow the cloister and the refectory, and down below them on the second floor of the Merveille is the Salle des Chevaliers. Besides the wonderful Gothic halls with their vaulted roofs and perfect simplicity of design, there are the endless series of crypts and dungeons, which leave a very strong impression on the minds of all those whose knowledge of architecture is lean. There is the shadowy crypt of Les Gros Pilliers down below the chancel of the church; there is the Charnier where the holy men were buried in the early days of the abbey; and there is the great dark space filled by the enormous wheel which was worked by the prisoners when Mont St Michel was nothing more than a great jail. It was by this means that the food for the occupants of the buildings was raised from down below. Without knowing it, in passing from one dark chamber to another, the guide takes his little flock of peering and wondering visitors all round the summit of the rock, for it is hard, even for those who endeavour to do so, to keep the cardinal points in mind, when, except for a chance view from a narrow window, there is nothing to correct the impression that you are still on the same side of the mount as the Merveille. At last the perambulation is finished—the dazzling sunshine is once more all around you as you come out to the steep steps that lead towards the ramparts.

CHAPTER VIII

Concerning Coutances and Some Parts of the Cotentin

When at last it is necessary to bid farewell to Mont St Michel, one is not compelled to lose sight of the distant grey silhouette for a long while. It remains in sight across the buttercup fields and sunny pastures on the road to Pontaubault. Then again, when climbing the zig-zag hill towards Avranches the Bay of Mont St Michel is spread out. You may see the mount again from Avranches itself, and then if you follow the coast-road towards Granville instead of the rather monotonous road that goes to its destination with the directness of a gun-shot, there are further views of the wonderful rock and its humble companion Tombelaine.

Keeping along this pretty road through the little village of Genets, where you actually touch the ocean, there is much pretty scenery to be enjoyed all the way to the busy town of Granville. It is a watering-place and a port, the two aspects of the town being divided from each other by the great rocky promontory of Lihou. If one climbs up right above the place this conformation is plainly visible, for down below is the stretch of sandy beach, with its frailly constructed concert rooms and cafes sheltering under the gaunt red cliffs, while over the shoulder of the

peninsula appears a glimpse of the piers and the masts of sailing ships. There is much that is picturesque in the seaport side of the town, particularly towards evening, when the red and green harbour-lights are reflected in the sea. There are usually five or six sailing ships loading or discharging their cargoes by the quays, and you will generally find a British tramp steamer lying against one of the wharves. The sturdy crocketed spire of the sombre old church of Notre Dame stands out above the long line of shuttered houses down by the harbour. It is a wonderful contrast, this old portion of Granville that surmounts the promontory, to the ephemeral and gay aspect of the watering-place on the northern side. But these sort of contrasts are to be found elsewhere than at Granville, for at Dieppe it is much the same, although the view of that popular resort that is most familiar in England, is the hideous casino and the wide sweep of gardens that occupy the sea-front. Those who have not been there would scarcely believe that the town possesses a castle perched upon towering cliffs, or that its splendid old church of Saint-Jacques is the real glory of the place. Granville cannot boast of quite so much in the way of antiquities, but there is something peculiarly fascinating about its dark church, in which the light seems unable to penetrate, and whose walls assume almost the same tones as the rocks from which the masonry was hewn.

I should like to describe the scenery of the twenty miles of country that lie between Granville and Coutances, but I have only passed over it on one occasion. It was nine o'clock in the evening, and the long drawn-out twilight had nearly faded away as I climbed up the long ascent which commences the road to Coutances, and before I had reached the village of Brehal it was quite dark. The road became absolutely deserted, and although one or two people on bicycles passed me about this time, they were carrying no lamps as is the usual custom in France, where the rules governing the use of a *bicyclette* are so numerous and intricate, but so absolutely ignored. My own lamp seemed to be a grave distraction among the invisible occupants of the roadside meadows, and often much lowing rose up on either side. The hedges would suddenly whirr with countless grasshoppers, although, no doubt, they had been amusing themselves with their monotonous noises for hours. The strange sound seemed to follow me in a most persistent fashion, and then would be merged into the croaking of a vast assemblage of frogs. These sounds, however, carry with them no real menace, however late the hour, but there is something which may almost strike terror into the heart, though it might almost be considered foolish by those who have not experienced a midnight ride in this country. The clipped and shaven trees that in daylight merely appear ridiculous, in the darkness assume an altogether different character. To the vivid imagination, it is easy to see a witch's broom swaying in the wind; a group of curious and distorted stems will suggest a row of large but painfully thin brownies, holding hands as they dance. Every moment, two or three figures of gaunt and lanky witches in spreading skirts will alarm you as they suddenly appear round a corner. When they are not so uncanny in their outlines, the trees will appear like clipped poodles standing upon their hind legs, or they will suddenly assume the character of a grove of palm trees. After a long stretch of this sort of country, it is pleasant to pass through some

sleeping village where there are just two or three lighted windows to show that there are still a few people awake besides oneself in this lonely country. I can imagine that the village of Hyenville has some claims to beauty. I know at least that it lies in a valley, watered by the river Sienne, and that the darkness allowed me to see an old stone bridge, with a cross raised above the centre of the parapet. Soon after this I began to descend the hill that leads into Coutances. A bend in the road, as I was rapidly descending, brought into view a whole blaze of lights, and I felt that here at last there were people and hotels, and an end to the ghostly sights of the open country. Then I came to houses, but they were all quite dark, and there was not a single human being in sight. Following this came a choice of streets without a possibility of knowing which one would lead in the direction of the hotel I was hoping to reach; but my perplexity was at length relieved by the advent of a tall youth whose cadaverous features were shown up by the street lamp overhead. He gave his directions clearly enough, but although I followed them carefully right up the hill past the cathedral, I began to think that I had overshot the mark, when another passer-by appeared in the silent street. I found that I was within a few yards of the hotel; but on hurrying forward, I found to my astonishment, that the whole building was completely shut up and no light appeared even within the courtyard. As I had passed the cathedral eleven reverberating notes had echoed over the town, and it seemed as though Coutances had retired earlier on this night of all nights in order that I might learn to travel at more rational hours. Going inside the courtyard, my anxiety was suddenly relieved by seeing the light of a candle in a stable on the further side; a man was putting up a horse, and he at once volunteered to arouse some one who would find a bedroom. After some shouting to the gallery above, a maid appeared, and a few minutes afterwards mine host himself, clad in a long flannel night robe and protecting a flickering candle-flame with his hand, appeared at a doorway. His long grey beard gave him a most venerable aspect. The note of welcome in his cheery voice was unmistakable and soon the maid who had spoken from the balcony had shown the way up a winding circular staircase to a welcome exchange to the shelter of a haystack which I had begun to fear would be my only resting-place for the night.

In the morning, the Hotel d'Angleterre proved to be a most picturesque old hostelry. Galleries ran round three sides of the courtyard, and the circular staircase was enclosed in one of those round towers that are such a distinctive feature of the older type of French inn.

The long main street does not always look deserted and in daylight it appeared as sunny and cheerful as one expects to find the chief thoroughfare of a thriving French town. Coutances stands on such a bold hill that the street, almost of necessity, drops precipitously, and the cathedral which ranks with the best in France, stands out boldly from all points of view. It was principally built in the thirteenth century, but a church which had stood in its place two centuries before, had been consecrated by Bishop Geoffrey de Montbray in 1056, in the presence of Duke William, afterwards William I. of England. The two western towers of the

present cathedral are not exactly similar, and owing to their curious formation of clustered spires they are not symmetrical. It is for this reason that they are often described as being unpleasing. I am unable to echo such criticism, for in looking at the original ideas that are most plainly manifest in this most astonishing cathedral one seems to be in close touch with the long forgotten builders and architects whose notions of proportion and beauty they contrived to stamp so indelibly upon their masterpiece. From the central tower there is a view over an enormous sweep of country which includes a stretch of the coast, for Coutances is only half a dozen miles from the sea. This central tower rises from a square base at the intersection of the transepts with the nave. It runs up almost without a break in an octagonal form to a parapet ornamented with open quatrefoils. The interior has a clean and fresh appearance owing to the recent restorations and is chiefly remarkable for the balustraded triforium which is continued round the whole church. In many of the windows there is glass belonging to the sixteenth century and some dates as early as the fourteenth century.

Besides the cathedral, the long main street of Coutances possesses the churches of St Nicholas and St Pierre. In St Nicholas one may see a somewhat unusual feature in the carved inscriptions dating from early in the seventeenth century which appear on the plain round columns. Here, as in the cathedral, the idea of the balustrade under the clerestory is carried out. The fourteen Stations of the Cross that as usual meet one in the aisles of the nave, are in this church painted with a most unusual vividness and reality, in powerful contrast to so many of these crucifixion scenes to be seen in Roman Catholic churches.

The church of St Pierre is illustrated here, with the cathedral beyond, but the drawing does not include the great central tower which is crowned by a pyramidal spire. This church belongs to a later period than the cathedral as one may see by a glance at the classic work in the western tower, for most of the building is subsequent to the fifteenth century. St Pierre and the cathedral form a most interesting study in the development from Early French architecture to the Renaissance; but for picturesqueness in domestic architecture Coutances cannot hold up its head with Lisieux, Vire, or Rouen. There is still a remnant of one of the town gateways and to those who spend any considerable time in the city some other quaint corners may be found. From the western side there is a beautiful view of the town with the great western towers of the cathedral rising gracefully above the quarries in the Bois des Vignettes. Another feature of Coutances is the aqueduct. It unfortunately does not date from Roman times when the place was known as Constantia, for there is nothing Roman about the ivy-clad arches that cross the valley on the western side.

From Coutances northwards to Cherbourg stretches that large tract of Normandy which used to be known as the Cotentin. At first the country is full of deep valleys and smiling hills covered with rich pastures and woodland, but as you approach Lessay at the head of an inlet of the sea the road passes over a flat heathy desert. The church at Lessay is a most

perfect example of Norman work. The situation is quite pretty, for near by flows the little river Ay, and the roofs are brilliant with orange lichen. The great square tower with its round-headed Norman windows, is crowned with a cupola. With the exception of the windows in the north aisle the whole of the interior is of pure Norman work. There is a double triforium and the round, circular arches rest on ponderous pillars and there is also a typical Norman semi-circular apse. The village, which is a very ancient one, grew round the Benedictine convent established here by one Turstan Halduc in 1040, and there may still be seen the wonderfully picturesque castle with its round towers.

Following the estuary of the river from Lessay on a minor road you come to the hamlet of St Germain-sur-Ay. The country all around is flat, but the wide stretches of sand in the inlet have some attractiveness to those who are fond of breezy and open scenery, and the little church in the village is as old as that of Lessay. One could follow this pretty coast-line northwards until the seaboard becomes bold, but we will turn aside to the little town of La Haye-du-Puits. There is a junction here on the railway for Carentan and St Lo, but the place seems to have gone on quite unaltered by this communication with the large centres of population. The remains of the castle, where lived during the eleventh century the Turstan Halduc just mentioned, are to be seen on the railway side of the town. The dungeon tower, picturesquely smothered in ivy, is all that remains of this Norman fortress. The other portion is on the opposite side of the road, but it only dates from the sixteenth century, when it was rebuilt. Turstan had a son named Odo, who was seneschal to William the Norman, and he is known to have received certain important lands in Sussex as a reward for his services. During the next century the owner of the castle was that Richard de la Haye whose story is a most interesting one. He was escaping from Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, when he had the ill luck to fall in with some Moorish pirates by whom he was captured and kept as a slave for some years. He however succeeded in regaining his liberty, and after his return to France, he and his wife, Mathilde de Vernon, founded the Abbey of Blanchelande. The ruins of this establishment are scarcely more than two miles from La Haye du Puits, but they unfortunately consist of little more than some arches of the abbey church and some of the walls of the lesser buildings.

Immediately north of La Haye there is some more heathy ground, but it is higher than the country surrounding Lessay. A round windmill, much resembling the ruined structure that stands out conspicuously on the bare tableland of Alderney, is the first of these picturesque features that we have seen in this part of the country. It is worth mention also on account of the fact that it was at St Sauveur-le-Vicomte, only about seven miles distant, that the first recorded windmill was put up in France about the year 1180, almost the same time as the first reference to such structures occurs in England. St Sauveur has its castle now occupied by the hospital. It was given to Sir John Chandos by Edward III. after the Treaty of Bretigny in 1360, and that courageous soldier, who saw so much fighting in France during the Hundred Years War, added much to the fortress which

had already been in existence since very early times in the history of the duchy.

A road runs from St Sauveur straight towards the sea. It passes the corner of a forest and then goes right down to the low sandy harbour of Port Bail. It is a wonderful country for atmospheric effects across the embanked swamps and sandhills that lie between the hamlet and the sea. One of the two churches has a bold, square tower, dating from the fifteenth century—it now serves as a lighthouse. The harbour has two other lights and, although it can only be entered at certain tides, the little port contrives to carry on a considerable export trade of farm produce, most of it being consumed in the Channel Islands.

The railway goes on to its terminus at Cartaret, a nicely situated little seaside village close to the cape of the same name. Here, if you tire of shrimping on the wide stretch of sands, it is possible to desert Normandy by the little steamer that during the summer plies between this point and Gorey in Jersey. Modern influences have given Cartaret a more civilised flavour than it had a few years ago, and it now has something of the aspect of a watering-place. Northwards from Cartaret, a road follows the coast-line two or three miles from the cliffs to Les Pieux. Then one can go on to Flamanville by the cape which takes its name from the village, and there see the seventeenth century moated manor house.

Cherbourg, the greatest naval port of France, is not often visited by those who travel in Normandy, for with the exception of the enormous breakwater, there is nothing beyond the sights of a huge dockyard town that is of any note. The breakwater, however, is a most remarkable work. It stands about two miles from the shore, is more than 4000 yards long by 100 yards wide, and has a most formidable appearance with its circular forts and batteries of guns.

The church of La Trinite was built during the English occupation and must have been barely finished before the evacuation of the place in 1450. Since that time the post has only been once attacked by the English, and that was as recently as 1758, when Lord Howe destroyed and burnt the forts, shipping and naval stores.

Leaving Cherbourg we will take our way southwards again to Valognes, a town which suffered terribly during the ceaseless wars between England and France. In 1346, Edward III. completely destroyed the place. It was captured by the English seventy-one years afterwards and did not again become French until that remarkable year 1450, when the whole of Normandy and part of Guienne was cleared of Englishmen by the victorious French armies under the Count of Clermont and the Duke of Alencon.

The Montgomery, whose defeat at Domfront castle has already been mentioned, held Valognes against the Catholic army, but it afterwards was captured by the victorious Henry of Navarre after the battle of Ivry near

Evreux.

Valognes possesses a good museum containing many Roman relics from the neighbourhood. A short distance from the town, on the east side, lies the village of Alleaume where there remain the ivy-grown ruins of the castle in which Duke William was residing when the news was brought to him of the insurrection of his barons under the Viscount of the Cotentin. It was at this place that William's fool revealed to him the danger in which he stood, and it was from here that he rode in hot haste to the castle of Falaise, a stronghold the Duke seemed to regard as safer than any other in his possession.

Still farther southwards lies the town of Carentan, in the centre of a great butter-making district. It is, however, a dull place—it can scarcely be called a city even though it possesses a cathedral. The earliest part of this building is the west front which is of twelfth century work. The spire of the central tower has much the same appearance as those crowning the two western towers at St Lo, but there is nothing about the building that inspires any particular enthusiasm although the tracery of some of the windows, especially of the reticulated one in the south transept, is exceptionally fine.

CHAPTER IX

Concerning St Lo and Bayeux

The richest pasture lands occupy the great butter-making district that lies north of St Lo. The grass in every meadow seems to grow with particular luxuriance, and the sleepy cows that are privileged to dwell in this choice country, show by their complaisant expressions the satisfaction they feel with their surroundings. It is wonderful to lie in one of these sunny pastures, when the buttercups have gilded the grass, and to watch the motionless red and white cattle as they solemnly let the hours drift past them. During a whole sunny afternoon, which I once spent in those pastoral surroundings, I can scarcely remember the slightest movement taking place among the somnolent herd. There was a gentle breeze that made waves in the silky sea of grass and sometimes stirred the fresh green leaves of the trees overhead. The birds were singing sweetly, and the distant tolling of the cathedral bells at Carentan added a richness to the sounds of nature. Imagine this scene repeated a thousand times in every direction and you have a good idea of this strip of pastoral Normandy.

About four miles north of St Lo, the main road drops down into the pleasant little village of Pont Hebert and then passes over the Vire where it flows through a lovely vale. In either direction the brimming waters of the river glide between brilliant green meadows, and as it winds away into the

distance, the trees become more and more blue and form a charming contrast to the brighter colours near at hand.

To come across the peasants of this pretty country in the garb one so frequently sees depicted as the usual dress of Normandy, it is necessary to be there on a Sunday or some fete day. On such days the wonderful frilled caps, that stand out for quite a foot above the head, are seen on every peasant woman. They are always of the most elaborate designs, and it is scarcely necessary to say that they are of a dazzling whiteness. The men have their characteristic dark blue close-fitting coats and the high-crowned cap that being worn on week days is much more frequently in evidence than the remarkable creations worn by the womenfolk.

There is a long climb from Pont Hebert to St Lo but there are plenty of pretty cottages scattered along the road, and these with crimson stonecrop on the roofs and may and lilac blossoming in the gardens, are pictures that prevent you from finding the way tedious. At last, from the considerable height you have reached, St Lo, dominated by its great church, appears on a hill scarcely a mile away. The old town, perched upon the flat surface of a mass of rock with precipitous sides, has much the same position as Domfront. But here we are shut in by other hills and there is no unlimited view of green forest-lands. The place, too, has a busy city-like aspect so that the comparison cannot be carried very far. When you have climbed the steep street that leads up through a quaint gateway to the extensive plateau above, you pass through the Rue Thiers and reach one of the finest views of the church. On one side of the street, there are picturesque houses with tiled roofs and curiously clustered chimneys, and beyond them, across a wide gravelly space, rises the majestic bulk of the west front of Notre Dame. From the wide flight of steps that leads to the main entrance, the eye travels upwards to the three deeply-recessed windows that occupy most of the surface of this end of the nave. Then the two great towers, seemingly similar, but really full of individual ornament, rise majestically to a height equal to that of the highest portion of the nave. Then higher still, soaring away into the blue sky above, come the enormous stone spires perforated with great multi-foiled openings all the way to the apex. Both towers belong to the fifteenth century, but they were not built at quite the same time. In the chancel there is a double arcade of graceful pillars without capitals. There is much fine old glass full of beautiful colours that make a curious effect when the sunlight falls through them upon the black and white marble slabs of the floor.

Wedged up against the north-west corner of the exterior stands a comparatively modern house, but this incongruous companionship is no strange thing in Normandy, although, as we have seen at Falaise, there are instances in which efforts are being made to scrape off the humble domestic architecture that clings, barnacle-like, upon the walls of so many of the finest churches. On the north side of Notre Dame, there is an admirably designed outside pulpit with a great stone canopy overhead full of elaborate tracery. It overhangs the pavement, and is a noticeable object as you go towards the Place de la Prefecture. On this wide and open terrace, a

band plays on Sunday evenings. There are seats under the trees by the stone balustrade from which one may look across the roofs of the lower town filling the space beneath. The great gravelly Place des Beaux-Regards that runs from the western side of the church, is terminated at the very edge of the rocky platform, and looking over the stone parapet you see the Vire flowing a hundred feet below. This view must have been very much finer before warehouses and factory-like buildings came to spoil the river-side scenery, but even now it has qualities which are unique. Facing the west end of the church, the most striking gabled front of the Maison Dieu forms part of one side of the open space. This building may at first appear almost too richly carved and ornate to be anything but a modern reproduction of a mediaeval house, but it has been so carefully preserved that the whole of the details of the front belong to the original time of the construction of the house. The lower portion is of heavy stone-work, above, the floors project one over the other, and the beauty of the timber-framing and the leaded windows is most striking.

St Lo teems with soldiers, and it has a town-crier who wears a dark blue uniform and carries a drum to call attention to his announcements. In the lower part of the town, in the Rue des Halles, you may find the corn-market now held in the church that was dedicated to Thomas a Becket. The building was in course of construction when the primate happened to be at St Lo and he was asked to name the saint to whom the church should be dedicated. His advice was that they should wait until some saintly son of the church should die for its sake. Strangely enough he himself died for the privileges of the church, and thus his name was given to this now desecrated house of God.

The remains of the fortifications that crown the rock are scarcely noticeable at the present time, and it is very much a matter of regret that the town has, with the exception of the Tour Beaux-Regards, lost the walls and towers that witnessed so many sieges and assaults from early Norman times right up to the days of Henry of Navarre. It was one of the towns that was held by Geoffrey Plantagenet in Stephen's reign, and it was burnt by Edward III. about the same time as Valognes. Then again in the religious wars of the sixteenth century, a most terrific attack was made on St Lo by Matignon who overcame the resistance of the garrison after Colombieres, the leader, had been shot dead upon the ramparts.

It is fortunate for travellers in hot weather that exactly half-way between St Lo and Bayeux there lies the shade of the extensive forest of Cerisy through which the main road cuts in a perfectly straight line. At Semilly there is a picturesque calvary. The great wooden cross towers up to a remarkable height so that the figure of our Lord is almost lost among the overhanging trees, and down below a double flight of mossy stone steps leads up to the little walled-in space where the wayfarer may kneel in prayer at the foot of the cross. Onward from this point, the dust and heat of the roadway can become excessive, so that when at last the shade of the forest is reached, its cool glades of slender beech-trees entice you from the glaring sunshine—for towards the middle of the day the roadway

receives no suggestion of shadows from the trees on either side.

In this part of the country, it is a common sight to meet the peasant women riding their black donkeys with the milk cans resting in panniers on either side. The cans are of brass with spherical bodies and small necks, and are kept brilliantly burnished.

The forest left behind, an extensive pottery district is passed through. The tuilleries may be seen by the roadside in nearly all the villages, Naron being entirely given up to this manufacture. Great embankments of dark brown jars show above the hedges, and the furnaces in which the earthenware is baked, are almost as frequent as the cottages. There are some particularly quaint, but absolutely simple patterns of narrow necked jugs that appear for sale in some of the shops at Bayeux and Caen.

Soon the famous Norman cathedral with its three lofty spires appears straight ahead. In a few minutes the narrow streets of this historic city are entered. The place has altogether a different aspect to the busy and cheerful St Lo. The ground is almost level, it is difficult to find any really striking views, and we miss the atmosphere of the more favourably situated town. Perhaps it is because of the evil influence of Caen, but certainly Bayeux lacks the cleanliness and absence of smells that distinguishes Coutances and Avranches from some of the other Norman towns. It is, however, rich in carved fronts and timber-framed houses, and probably is the nearest rival to Lisieux in these features. The visitor is inclined to imagine that he will find the tapestry for which he makes a point of including Bayeux in his tour, at the cathedral or some building adjoining it, but this is not the case. It is necessary to traverse two or three small streets to a tree-grown public square where behind a great wooden gateway is situated the museum. As a home for such a priceless relic as this great piece of needlework, the museum seems scarcely adequate. It has a somewhat dusty and forlorn appearance, and although the tapestry is well set out in a long series of glazed wooden cases, one feels that the risks of fire and other mischances are greater here than they would be were the tapestry kept in a more modern and more fire-proof home. Queen Mathilda or whoever may have been either the actual producer or the inspirer of the tapestry must have used brilliant colours upon this great length of linen. During the nine centuries that have passed since the work was completed the linen has assumed the colour of light brown canvas, but despite this, the greens, blues, reds, and buffs of the stitches show out plainly against the unworked background. There is scarcely an English History without a reproduction of one of the scenes portrayed in the long series of pictures, and London has in the South Kensington Museum a most carefully produced copy of the original. Even the chapter-house of Westminster Abbey has its coloured reproductions of the tapestry, so that it is seldom that any one goes to Bayeux without some knowledge of the historic events portrayed in the needlework. There are fifty-eight separate scenes on the 230 feet of linen. They commence with Harold's instructions from Edward the Confessor to convey to William the Norman the fact that he (Harold) is to become king of England. Then follows the whole story leading up to the flight of the

English at Senlac Hill.

Even if this wonderful piece of work finds a more secure resting-place in Paris, Bayeux will still attract many pilgrims for its cathedral and its domestic architecture compare favourably with many other Norman towns.

The misfortunes that attended the early years of the life of the cathedral were so numerous and consistent that the existence of the great structure to-day is almost a matter for surprise. It seems that the first church made its appearance during the eleventh century, and it was in it that Harold unwittingly took that sacred oath on the holy relics, but by some accident the church was destroyed by fire and there is probably nothing left of this earliest building except the crypt. Eleven years after the conquest of England, William was present at Bayeux when a new building built by his half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, was consecrated. Ten years after his death, however, this second church was burnt down. They rebuilt it once more a few years later, but a third time a fire wrought much destruction. The portions of the cathedral that survived this century of conflagrations can be seen in the two great western towers, in the arches of the Norman nave, and a few other portions. The rest of the buildings are in the Early French period of pointed architecture, with the exception of the central tower which is partly of the flamboyant period, but the upper portion is as modern as the middle of last century. The spandrels of the nave arcades are covered over with a diaper work of half a dozen or more different patterns, some of them scaly, some representing interwoven basket-work, while others are composed simply of a series of circles, joined together with lines. There are curious little panels in each of these spandrels that are carved with the most quaint and curious devices. Some are strange, Chinese-looking dragons, and some show odd-looking figures or mitred saints. The panel showing Harold taking the oath is modern. There is a most imposing pulpit surmounted by a canopy where a female figure seated on a globe is surrounded by cherubs, clouds (or are they rocks?) and fearful lightning. At a shrine dedicated to John the Baptist, the altar bears a painting in the centre showing the saint's dripping head resting in the charger. Quite close to the west front of the cathedral there stands a house that still bears its very tall chimney dating from mediaeval times. Not far from this there is one of the timber-framed fifteenth century houses ornamented with curious carvings of small figures, and down in the Rue St Malo there is an even richer example of the same type of building. On the other side of the road, nearer the cathedral, a corner house stands out conspicuously.

[Illustration: AN ANCIENT HOUSE IN THE RUE ST MALO, BAYEUX]

It is shown in the illustration given here and its curious detail makes it one of the most quaint of all the ancient houses in the city.

Some of these old buildings date from the year 1450, when Normandy was swept clear of the English, and it is probably owing to the consideration of the leader of the French army that there are any survivals of this time. The Lord of Montenay was leading the Duke of Alencon's troops and with him

were Pierre de Louvain, Robert Conigrain and a number of free archers. After they had battered the walls of Bayeux with their cannon for fifteen days, and after they had done much work with mines and trenches, the French were ready for an assault. The King of France, however, and the notables who have been mentioned "had pity for the destruction of the city and would not consent to the assault." Without their orders, however, the troops, whose ardour could not be restrained, attacked in one place, but not having had the advice of their leaders the onslaught was quite indecisive, both sides suffering equally from arrows and culverins. It was soon after this that Matthew Gough, the English leader, was obliged to surrender the city, and we are told that nine hundred of the bravest and the best soldiers of the Duchy of Normandy came out and were allowed to march to Cherbourg. The French lords "for the honour of courtesy" lent some of their horses to carry the ladies and the other gentlewomen, and they also supplied carts to convey the ordinary womenfolk who went with their husbands. "It was," says Jacques le Bouvier, who describes the scene, "a thing pitiful to behold. Some carried the smallest of the children in their arms, and some were led by hand, and in this way the English lost possession of Bayeux."

[Illustration: THE GATEWAY OF THE CHATEAU]

CHAPTER X

Concerning Caen and the Coast Towards Trouville

Caen, like mediaeval London, is famed for its bells and its smells. If you climb up to any height in the town you will see at once that the place is crowded with the spires and towers of churches; and, if you explore any of the streets, you are sure to discover how rudimentary are the notions of sanitation in the historic old city. If you come to Caen determined to thoroughly examine all the churches, you must allow at least two or three days for this purpose, for although you might endeavour to "do" the place in one single day, you would remember nothing but the fatigue, and the features of all the churches would become completely confused.

My first visit to Caen, several years ago, is associated with a day of sight-seeing commenced at a very early hour. I had been deposited at one of the quays by the steamer that had started at sunrise and had slowly glided along the ten miles of canal from Ouistreham, reaching its destination at about five o'clock. The town seemed thoroughly awake at this time, the weather being brilliantly fine. White-capped women were everywhere to be seen sweeping the cobbled streets with their peculiarly fragile-looking brooms. It was so early by the actual time, however, that it seemed wise to go straight to the hotel and to postpone the commencement of sight-seeing until a more rational hour. My rooms at the hotel, however, were not yet

vacated, so that it was impossible to go to my bedroom till eight o'clock. The hotel courtyard, though picturesque, with its three superimposed galleries and its cylindrical tower containing the staircase, was not, at this hour in the morning at least, a place to linger in. It seemed therefore the wisest plan to begin an exploration of some of the adjoining streets to fill the time. After having seen the exterior of three or four churches, the interiors of some others; after having explored a dozen curious courtyards and the upper part of the town, where the Chateau stands, the clocks began to strike seven, although to me it seemed like noon. By half-past eight the afternoon seemed well advanced, and when dejeuner made its appearance at the hotel it seemed as though the day would never cease. I had by this time seen several more churches and interesting old buildings, and my whole senses had become so jaded that I would scarcely have moved a yard to have seen the finest piece of architecture in the whole of Normandy. The circumstances of this day, were, no doubt, exceptional, but I mention them as a warning to those who with a pathetic conscientiousness endeavour to see far more than they can possibly comprehend in the space of a very few hours. It would be far better to spend one's whole time in the great church of the Abbaye aux Hommes, and photograph in one's mind the simplicity of the early Norman structure, than to have a confused recollection of this, St Pierre, the church of the Abbaye aux Darnes and half a dozen others.

The galleried hotel I have mentioned was known as the Hotel St Barbe. It is now converted into a warehouse, but no one need regret this for it was more pleasant to look at than to actually stay in. I am glad, personally, to have had this experience; to have seen the country carts, with the blue sheep-skins over the horse collars, drive into the courtyard, and to have watched the servants of the hotel eating their meals at a long table in the open air. There was a Spanish flavour about the place that is not found in the modern hotels.

There is no town I have ever known more confusing in its plan than Caen, and, although I have stayed there for nearly a week on one occasion, I am still a little uncertain in which direction to turn for the castle when I am at the church of St Jean. The streets, as a rule, are narrow and have a busy appearance that is noticeable after the quiet of Bayeux. The clatter and noise of the omnibuses has been subdued in recent years by the introduction of electric trams which sweep round the corners with a terrifying speed, for after a long sojourn in the country and quiet little towns one loses the agility and wariness of the town-bred folk.

Caen, of course, does not compete with Lisieux for its leading position as the possessor of the largest number of old houses, but it nevertheless can show some quaint carved fronts in the Rue St Pierre and the narrow streets adjoining. At the present time the marks of antiquity are being removed from the beautiful renaissance courtyard of the Bourse near St Pierre. The restoration has been going on for some years, and the steps that lead up to the entrance in one corner of the quadrangle are no longer stained with the

blackish-green of a prolonged period of damp. But it is better, however, that this sixteenth century house should assume a fictitious newness rather than fall entirely into disrepair. It was originally the house of one of the wealthy families of Caen named Le Valois, and was known as the Hotel d'Escoville. Another splendid house is the Hotel de la Monnaie built by the famous and princely merchant Etienne Duval, Sieur de Mondrainville, whose great wealth enabled him to get sufficient supplies into Metz to make it possible for the place to hold out during its siege in 1553. In his most admirably written book "Highways and Byways in Normandy," Mr Dearmer gives an interesting sketch of this remarkable man whose success brought him jealous enemies. They succeeded in bringing charges against him for which he was exiled, and at another time he was imprisoned in the castle at Caen until, with great difficulty, he had proved the baseness of the attacks upon his character. Duval was over seventy when he died, being, like Job, wealthy and respected, for he had survived the disasters that had fallen upon him.

The gateway of the Chateau is the best and most imposing portion of the fortifications of Caen. The castle being now used as barracks, visitors as a rule are unable to enter, but as the gateway may be seen from outside the deep moat, the rest of the place need not tantalise one. In William the Conqueror's time the castle was being built, and the town walls included the two great abbeys for which Caen is chiefly famous. These two magnificent examples of Norman architecture have been restored with great thoroughness so that the marks of antiquity that one might expect are entirely wanting in both buildings. The exterior of the great church of St Etienne disappoints so many, largely from the fact that the gaunt west front is the only view one really has of the building except from a distance. Inside, services seem to go on at most times of the day, and when you are quietly looking at the mighty nave with its plain, semicircular arches and massive piers, you are suddenly startled by the entry from somewhere of a procession of priests loudly singing some awe-inspiring chant, the guttural tones of the singers echoing through the aisles. Following the clerical party will come a rabble of nuns, children and ordinary laity, and before you have scarcely had time to think a service has commenced, people are kneeling, and if you do not make haste towards the doors a priest will probably succeed in reaching you with a collecting dish in which one is not inclined to place even a sou if the service has hindered the exploration of the church. Owing to the perpetuation of an error in some of the English guides to Normandy, it is often thought that a thigh-bone of the founder of the abbey is still lying beneath the marble slab in the sanctuary, but this is a great mistake, for that last poor relic of William the Conqueror was lost during the Revolution. The whole story of the death, the burial, and the destruction of the tomb and remains of the founder of the abbey are most miserable and even gruesome. William was at Rouen when he died, and we need scarcely remind ourselves of that tragic scene discovered by the clergy when they came to the house not long after the great man had expired. Every one of William's suite had immediately recognised the changed state of affairs now that the inflexible

will that had controlled the two kingdoms had been removed, and each, concerned for himself, had betaken himself with indecent haste to England or wherever his presence might be most opportune. In this way, there being no one left to watch the corpse, the Archbishop of Rouen discovered that the house and even the bed had been pillaged, so that the royal body was lying in great disorder until reverently tended by a Norman gentleman named Herluin. Having fulfilled William's wishes and brought the remains to Caen, a stately funeral was arranged. As the procession slowly passed through the narrow streets, however, it was interrupted by an alarm of fire-some of the wooden houses blazing fiercely just when the bier was passing. The flames grew so quickly that in some danger the mournful procession was dispersed and the coffin was only attended by a few monks when the gates of the Abbaye aux Hommes were reached. Eventually the burial ceremonies were in progress beside the open grave within the church, but another interruption ensued. Scarcely had the Bishop of Evreux concluded his address when everybody was startled at hearing the loud voice of Ascelin resounding through the church. He was a well-known man, a burgher, and a possessor of considerable wealth, and it was therefore with considerable anxiety that the clergy heard his claim upon the ground in which they were about to bury William. It was the actual site of a house that had belonged to Ascelin's father, for the dead king had shown no consideration to private claims when he was building the great abbey to appease the wrath of the church. The disturbance having been settled by the payment for the grave of a sum which Ascelin was induced to accept, the proceedings were resumed. But then came the worst scene of all, for it has been recorded that the coffin containing the ponderous body of the king had not been made with sufficient strength, and as it was being lowered into the grave, the boards gave way, and so gruesome was the result that the church was soon emptied. It thus came about that once more in the last phase of all William was deserted except by a few monks.

The monument which was raised over the Conqueror's grave, was, however, of a most gorgeous character. It was literally encrusted with precious gems, and it is known that enormous quantities of gold from the accumulated stores of wealth which William had made were used by Otto the goldsmith (sometimes known as Aurifaber) who was entrusted with the production of this most princely tomb. Such a striking object as this could scarcely pass through many centuries in safety, and we find that in the Huguenot wars of the seventeenth century it was largely destroyed and the stone coffin was broken open, the bones being scattered. We only know what became of a thigh-bone which was somehow rescued by a monk belonging to the abbey. He kept it for some time, and in 1642 it was replaced in a new, but much less gorgeous tomb. About one hundred years later, it was moved to another part of the church, but in the Revolution this third tomb was broken into, and the last relic of the Conqueror was lost. Then after some years, the Prefet of Calvados placed upon the site of the desecrated tomb the slab of black marble that still marks the spot. The inscription reads "Hic sepultus est, Invictissimus Guilielmus Conquestor, Normanniae Dux et Angliae Rex, Hujusce domus Conditor Qui obit anno MLXXXVII."

When Lanfranc had been sent to the Pope by William with a view to making some arrangement by which the King could retain his wife Matilda and at the same time the good offices of the Church, his side of the bargain consisted in undertaking to build two great abbeys at Caen, one for men and one for women. The first we have already been examining, the other is at the eastern side of the town on the hill beyond the castle. It is a more completely Norman building than St Etienne, but its simple, semi-circular arches and round-headed windows contrast strangely with the huge pontifical canopy of draped velvet that is suspended above the altar, and very effectually blocks the view of the Norman apse beyond. The smallness of the windows throughout the building subdues the light within, and thus gives St Trinite a somewhat different character to St Etienne. The capitals of the piers of the arcade are carved with strange-looking monkeys and other designs, and there are chevron mouldings conspicuous in the nave. The tomb of Queen Mathilda is in the choir. Like that of her husband it has been disturbed more than once, so that the marble slab on top is all that remains of the original.

Opposite the Place Reine Mathilde stands the desecrated church of St Gilles, one of the numerous beautiful buildings in Caen now in partial ruin and occupied as warehouses, wine-vaults or workshops. They are all worth looking for, and if possible examining inside as well as out, for they include some beautiful flamboyant structures and others of earlier date, such as St Nicholas, illustrated here, which in part dates from Norman times. St Etienne le Vieux, quite close to the Abbaye aux Hommes, is a beautiful building rich in elaborate carving and rows of gargoyles. It was built in the early years of the fifteenth century in place of one which had fallen into ruin when Henry V. besieged Caen. It is still unrestored, and if you peep inside the open doors you will see the interior filled with ladders, boxes, brooms, and a thousand odds and ends, this most beautiful structure being used as a municipal workshop.

We have more than once referred to the church of St Pierre, but as yet we have made no reference to its architecture. The tower and graceful spire needs no detailed description, for it appears in the coloured illustration adjoining, and from it one may see what a strikingly perfect structure this is for such an early date as 1308. It is a marvel of construction, for the spire within is hollow, and without any interior framework or supports at all. Although it is so seemingly frail, it was used during the sixteenth century for military purposes, having been selected as a good position for firing upon the castle, and it naturally became a target for the guns inside the fortress. You cannot now see the holes made by the cannon balls, but although they were not repaired for many years the tower remained perfectly stable, as a proof of the excellent work of Nicholas, the Englishman who built it.

Unlike the church of the Abbaye aux Dames, St Pierre is brilliantly lit inside by large, traceried windows that let in the light through their painted glass. In the nave the roof is covered with the most elaborate

vaulting with great pendants dropping from the centre of each section; but for the most crowded ornament one must examine the chancel and the chapels.

The church of St Jean is not conspicuous, but it is notable for two or three features. The western tower is six and a half feet out of perpendicular, the triforium has a noticeable balustrade running all round, and the chancel is longer than the nave. St Sauveur, in the Rue St Pierre is of the same period as St Jean, but its tower if it had been crocketed would have very closely resembled that of St Pierre, and it is chiefly notable for the fact that it is two churches thrown into one—that of St Eustace being joined on to it.

Another feature of Caen that is often overlooked is the charm of its old courtyards. Behind some of the rather plain stone fronts, the archways lead into little paved quadrangles that have curious well-heads, rustic outside staircases, and odd-shaped dormer windows on the steep roofs. One of these courtyards behind a house in the Rue de Bayeux is illustrated here, but to do justice to the quaintnesses that are to be revealed, it would have been necessary to give several examples. In the Boulevard St Pierre, where the pavements are shaded by pink horse chestnuts there stands the Tour le Roy. It is the most noticeable remnant of the days when Caen was a walled and strongly fortified city, but as you look at it to-day it seems too much like a good piece of the sham antique to be found at large exhibitions. It is the restoration that is at fault, and not the tower itself, which is really old, and no doubt is in quiet rebellion at the false complexion it is obliged to wear.

The view of Caen from across the race-course is a beautiful one, but under some aspects this is quite eclipsed by the wonderful groupings of the church towers seen from the canal as it goes out of the town towards the east. I can remember one particular afternoon when there was a curious mistiness through which the western sunlight passed, turning everything into a strange, dull gold. It was a light that suppressed all that was crude and commercial near at hand and emphasised the medievalism of the place by throwing out spires and towers in softly tinted silhouettes. I love to think of Caen robed in this cloth of gold, and the best I can wish for every one who goes there with the proper motives, is that they may see the place in that same light.

On the left, a few miles out of Caen on the road to Creully, stands the Abbaye d'Ardennes where Charles VII. lodged when his army was besieging the city in 1450. The buildings are now used as a farm, and the church is generally stacked with hay and straw up to the triforium.

Although they start towards the east, the canal and the river Orne taking parallel courses run generally towards the north, both entering the sea by the village of Ouistreham, the ancient port of Caen. Along the margin of the canal there is a good road, and almost hidden by the long grass outside the tall trees that line the canal on each bank, runs the steam tramway to Cabourg and the coast to the west of the

Orne. Except when the fussy little piece of machinery drawing three or four curious, open-sided trams, is actually passing, the tramway escapes notice, for the ground is level and the miniature rails are laid on the ground without any excavating or embanking. The scenery as you go along the tramway, the road, or the canal, is charming, the pastures on either side being exceedingly rich, and the red and white cattle seem to revel in the long grass and buttercups. Heronville, Blainville and other sleepy villages are pleasantly perched on the slight rise on the western side of the canal. Their churches, with red roofs all subdued with lichen into the softest browns, rise above the cottages or farm buildings that surround them in the ideal fashion that is finally repeated at Ouistreham where locks impound the waters of the canal, and a great lighthouse stands out more conspicuously than the church tower. Seen through the framework of closely trimmed trees Ouistreham makes a notable picture. The great Norman church is so exceedingly imposing for such a mere village, that it is easy to understand how, as a port in the Middle Ages, Ouistreham flourished exceedingly.

The tramway crosses the canal at Benouville on its way to Cabourg, and leaving the shade of birches and poplars takes its way over the open fields towards the sea. Benouville is best remembered on account of its big chateau with a great classic portico much resembling a section of Waterloo Place perched upon a fine terraced slope. Ranville has an old church tower standing in lonely fashion by itself, and you pass a conspicuous calvary as you go on to the curious little seaside resort known as Le Home-Sur-Mer. The houses are bare and (if one may coin a word) seasidey. Perched here and there on the sandy ridge between the road and the shore, they have scarcely anything more to suggest a garden than the thin wiry grass that contrives to exist in such soil.

Down on the wide sandy beach there is an extensive sweep of the coast to be seen stretching from beyond Ouistreham to the bold cliffs of Le Havre. Keeping along the road by the tramway you have been out of sight of the sea, but in a few minutes the pleasant leafiness of Cabourg has been reached. Here everything has the full flavour of a seaside resort, for we find a casino, a long esplanade, hotels, shops and bathing apparatus. It is a somewhat strong dose of modern life after the slumbering old world towns and villages we have been exploring, and it is therefore with great satisfaction that we turn toward the village of Dives lying close at hand. The place possesses a splendid old market hall, more striking perhaps than that of Ecouche and a picturesque inn—the Hotel Guillaume le Conquerant. The building is of stone with tiled roofs, and in the two courtyards there are galleries and much ancient timber-framing, but unfortunately the proprietor has not been content to preserve the place in its natural picturesqueness. He has crowded the exterior, as well as the rooms, with a thousand additions of a meretricious character which detract very much from the charm of the fine old inn and defeat the owner's object, that of making it attractive on account of its age and associations. Madame de Sevigne

wrote many of her letters in one of the rooms, but we know that she saw none of the sham antique lamps, the well-head, or the excess of flowers that blaze in the courtyards. On account of its name, the unwary are trapped into thinking that William the Norman—for he had still to defeat Harold—could have frequently been seen strolling about this hostelry, when his forces for invading England were gathering and his fleet of ships were building. This is, of course, a total misapprehension, for the only structure that contains anything that dates back to 1066 is the church. Even this building dates chiefly from the fourteenth century, but there is to be seen, besides the Norman walls, a carved wooden cross that is believed to have been found in the sea, and therefore to have some connection with William's great fleet and its momentous voyage to England. The names of the leading men who accompanied William are engraved upon two marble slabs inside the church, and on the hill above the village a short column put up by M. de Caumont, commemorates the site upon which William is believed to have inspected his forces previous to their embarkation.

It is a difficult matter to form any clear idea of the size of this army for the estimates vary from 67,000 to 14,000, and there is also much uncertainty as to the number of ships employed in transporting the host across the channel. The lowest estimates suggest 696 vessels, and there is every reason to believe that they were quite small. The building of so large a fleet of even small boats between the winter and summer of 1066 must have employed an enormous crowd of men, and we may be justified in picturing a very busy scene on the shores of this portion of the coast of Normandy. Duke William's ship, which was named the *Mora*, had been presented to him by his wife Mathilda, and most of the vessels had been built and manned by the Norman barons and prelates, the Bishop of Bayeux preparing no less than a hundred ships. The Conquest of England must have almost been regarded as a holy crusade!

When the fleet left the mouth of the river Dives it did not make at once for Pevensey Bay. The ships instead worked along the coast eastwards to the Somme, where they waited until a south wind blew, then the vessels all left the estuary each carrying a light, for it was almost dark. By the next morning the white chalk of Beachy Head was in sight, and at nine o'clock William had landed on English soil.

Close to Dives and in sight of the hill on which the Normans were mustered, there is a small watering-place known as Houlgate-sur-mer. The houses are charmingly situated among trees, and the place has in recent years become known as one of those quiet resorts where princes and princesses with their families may be seen enjoying the simple pleasures of the seaside, *incognito*. This fact, of course, gets known to enterprising journalists who come down and photograph these members of the European royal families wherever they can get them in particularly unconventional surroundings.

From Houlgate all the way to Trouville the country is wooded and hilly, and in the hollows, where the timber-framed farms with their thatched roofs are picturesquely arranged, there is much to attract the visitor who, wearying of the gaiety of Trouville and its imitators along the coast, wishes to find solitudes and natural surroundings.

CHAPTER XI

Some Notes on the History of Normandy

The early inhabitants of Normandy submitted to the Roman legions under Titurus Sabinus in B.C. 58, only a few years before Caesar's first attempt upon Britain. By their repeated attacks upon Roman territory the Gaulish tribes had brought upon themselves the invasion which, after some stubborn fighting, made their country a province of the Roman Empire. Inter-tribal strife having now ceased, the civilisation of Rome made its way all over the country including that northern portion known as Neustria, much of which from the days of Rollo came to be called Normandy. Traces of the Roman occupation are scattered all over the province, the most remarkable being the finely preserved theatre at Lillebonne, a corruption of Juliabona, mentioned in another chapter.

In the second century Rouen, under its Roman name Rotomagos, is mentioned by Ptolemy. It was then merely the capital of the tribe of Velocasses, but in Diocletian's reign it had become not only the port of Roman Paris, but also the most important town in the province. In time the position occupied by Rotomagos became recognised as one having greater strategical advantages than Juliabona, a little further down the river, and this Gallo-Roman precursor of the modern Rouen became the headquarters of the provincial governor. The site of Rotomagos would appear to include the Palais de Justice and the Cathedral of the present day.

After the four centuries of Roman rule came the incursions of the savage hordes of northern Europe, and of the great army of Huns, under Attila, who marched through Gaul in A.D. 451. The Romans with their auxiliaries engaged Attila at Chalons—the battle in which fabulous numbers of men are said to have fallen on both sides.

The Roman power was soon completely withdrawn from Gaul, and the Franks under Clovis, after the battle of Soissons, made themselves complete masters of the country. In 511 Clovis died. He had embraced Christianity fifteen years before, having been baptised at Rheims, probably through the influence of his wife Clothilda. Then for two hundred and fifty years France was under the Merovingian kings, and throughout much of

this period there was very little settled government, Neustria, together with the rest of France, suffering from the lawlessness that prevailed under these "sluggard" kings. Rouen was still the centre of many of the events connected with the history of Neustria. We know something of the story of Hilparik, a king of Neustria, whose brutal behaviour to his various queens and the numerous murders and revenges that darkened his reign, form a most unsavoury chapter in the story of this portion of France.

Following this period came the time when France was ruled by the mayors of the palace who, owing to the weakness of the sovereigns, gradually assumed the whole of the royal power. After Charles Martel, the most famous of these mayors, had defeated the Saracens at Tours, came his son Pepin-le-Bref, the father of Charlemagne. Childeric, the last of the Merovingian kings, had been put out of the way in a monastery and Pepin had become the King of France. Charlemagne, however, soon made himself greater still as Emperor of an enormous portion of Europe—France, Italy, and Germany all coming under his rule. At his death Charlemagne divided his empire. His successor Louis le Debonnaire, owing to his easy-going weakness, fell a prey to Charlemagne's other sons, and at his death, Charles the Bald became King of France and the country west of the Rhine. The other portions of the empire falling to Lothaire and the younger Louis.

During all this period, France had suffered from endless fighting and the famines that came as an unevitable consequence, and just about this time Neustria suffered still further owing to the incursions of the Danes. Even in Charlemagne's time the black-sailed ships of the Northmen had been seen hovering along the coast near the mouth of the Seine, and it has been said that the great Emperor wept at the sight of some of these awe-inspiring pirates.

In the year 841 the Northmen had sailed up the Seine as far as Rouen, but they found little to plunder, for during the reign of the Merovingian kings, the town had been reduced to a mere shadow of its former prosperity. There had been a great fire and a great plague, and its ruin had been rendered complete during the civil strife that succeeded the death of Charlemagne. Wave after wave came the northern invasions led by such men as Bjorn Ironside, and Ragnar Lodbrog. Charles the Bald, fearing to meet these dreaded warriors, bribed them away from the walls of Paris in the year 875. But they came again twelve years afterwards in search of more of the Frenchmen's gold. When Charles the Fat, the German Emperor, became also King of France, he had to suffer for his treacherous murder of a Danish chief, for soon afterwards came the great Rollo with a large fleet of galleys, and Paris was besieged once more. Odo, Count of Paris, held out successfully, but when the king came from Germany with his army, instead of attacking the Danes, he induced them to retire by offering them a bribe of 800 lbs. of silver. Before long Odo became King of France, but after ten years of constant fighting, he died and was succeeded by Charles the Simple. This title does an injustice to his character, for he certainly did

more for France than most of his predecessors. Finding the Northmen too firmly established in Neustria to have any hope of successfully driving them out of the country, he made a statesmanlike arrangement with Rollo. The Dane was to do homage to the French king, to abandon his gods Thor, Odin and the rest for Christianity, and in return was to be made ruler of the country between the River Epte and the sea, and westwards as far as the borders of Brittany. Rollo was also to be given the hand of the Princess Gisela in marriage. Rouen became the capital of the new Duchy of Normandy, and the old name of Neustria disappeared.

The Northmen were not at this time numerous, but they continued to come over in considerable numbers establishing centres such as that of Bayeux, where only Danish was spoken. As in England, this warrior people showed the most astonishing adaptability to the higher civilisation with which they had come into contact, and the new generations that sprang up on French soil added to the vigour and daring of their ancestors the manners and advanced customs of France, although the Northmen continued to be called "The Pirates" for a considerable time. When Rollo died he was succeeded by his son William Longsword, and from an incident mentioned by Mr T.A. Cook in his "Story of Rouen," we can see the attitude of the Normans towards Charles the Simple. He had sent down to Rouen two court gallants to sympathise with the Princess Gisela, his daughter, for the rough treatment she had received at the hands of Rollo, but they were both promptly seized and hanged in what is now the Place du Marche Vieux.

Great stone castles were beginning to appear at all the chief places in Normandy, and when Duke Richard had succeeded Harold Blacktooth we find that the Duchy was assuming an ordered existence internally. The feudal system had then reached its fullest development, and the laws established by Rollo were properly administered. With the accession of Hugh Capet to the throne of France, Normandy had become a most loyal as well as powerful fief of the crown. The tenth century witnessed also an attempt on the part of the serfs of the Duchy to throw off something of the awful grip of the feudal power. These peasants were the descendants of Celts, of Romans, and of Franks, and their efforts to form a representative assembly bear a pathetic resemblance to the movement towards a similar end in Russia of to-day. The representatives of the serfs were treated with the most fearful cruelty and sent back to their villages; but the movement did not fail to have its effects, for the condition of the villains in Normandy was always better than in other parts of France.

Broadly speaking, all the successors of Rollo, the first Duke of Normandy, governed the country with wisdom and ability, and although there was more or less constant war, either with the French, who were always hoping to regain the lost province, or with rebellious barons who disputed the authority of the dukes, yet the country progressed steadily and became prosperous. Abbeys and churches that the invaders had laid waste were rebuilt on a larger scale. At Jumieges there are still to be seen some remains of the church that William Longsword began to build for the unfortunate monks who had been left homeless after their abbey had been

destroyed by the "Pirates." Richard I., who died in 996, had added to the Cathedral at Rouen, and the abbey of St Ouen prospered greatly in the religious revival that became so widespread during the eleventh century. Duke Richard II. had been assisted on one occasion by Olaf, King of Norway, and before his return to the north that monarch, impressed no doubt by the pomp of the ceremonial, was in 1004 baptised in the cathedral at Rouen.

After Richard II. came Robert the Magnificent, who was called also Robert the Devil by the people. It was he, who from the walls of his castle at Falaise, if the legend be true, first saw Arlette the tanner's daughter who afterwards became the Mother of William the Bastard. As a boy William had a perilous life, and it is almost marvellous that he survived to change his appellation to that of "Conqueror." Robert the Magnificent had joined one of the crusades to the Holy Land when William was only seven years old, but before he left Normandy, he had made it known that he wished the boy to succeed him. For twenty years there was civil war between the greater barons and the supporters of the heir, but in the end William showed himself sufficiently strong to establish his power. He won a great battle at Val-es-Dunes where he had been met by the barons led by Guy of Burgundy, and, having taken some of the most formidable fortresses in the Duchy, he turned his attention to his foes outside with equal success. Soon after this William married Mathilda a daughter of Count Baldwin of Flanders, but although by this act he made peace with her country, William soon found himself in trouble with the church. Bishop Mauger, whom he had appointed to the See of Rouen, found fault with the marriage owing to its being within the forbidden degrees of relationship, and the papal sanction having been refused, William only obtained his wishes through the agency of Lanfranc. All his life William appears to have set a stern example of purity in family life, and his relations with the church, from this time to his death, seem to have been most friendly. It was largely due to his religious life as well as the support he gave to the monasteries that William was able to give the colour of a religious crusade to his project for invading England. Harold had slighted the sacredness of the holy relics of the saints of Normandy, and William was to show England that their king's action was not to pass unpunished. In this way the Norman host that assembled at Dives, while the great fleet was being prepared, included many who came from outside William's dominions. After the whole of England had been completely subjugated William had his time and attention largely taken up with affairs in Normandy. His son Robert was soon in open rebellion, and assisted by the French King, Philip I., Robert brought about the death of his father, for it was while devastating a portion of French territory that William received the injury which resulted in his death. Robert then became Duke of Normandy, and there followed those sanguinary quarrels between the three brothers William Rufus, King of England, Henry Beauclerc and Robert. Finally, after his return from Palestine, Robert came to England to endeavour to make peace with his younger brother Henry, who was now king, but the quarrel was not to be settled in this way. Henry, determined to add Normandy to the English crown, crossed the channel with a large army and

defeated his brother at Tinchebrai in 1106. With the accession of Stephen to the English throne in 1135, came the long struggle between that king and Maud. When Henry II. married Eleanor of Aquitaine, not only that great province but also Maine and Anjou came under his sway, so that for a time Normandy was only a portion of the huge section of France belonging to the English Crown. During his long reign Henry spent much time in Normandy, and Argentan and Avranches are memorable in connection with the tragedy of Thomas a Becket. During the absence of Richard Coeur-de-Lion in Palestine John became exceedingly friendly with Philip Augustus, the French King, but when Richard was dead he found cause to quarrel with the new English king and, after the fall of the Chateau Gaillard, John soon discovered that he had lost the Duchy of Normandy and had earned for himself the name of "Lackland."

From this time, namely, the commencement of the thirteenth century, Normandy belonged to the crown of France although English armies were, until 1450, in frequent occupation of the larger towns and fortresses.