Normandy, Part 3 - The Scenery & Romance Of Its Ancient Towns

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NORMANDY:

THE SCENERY & ROMANCE OF ITS ANCIENT TOWNS:

DEPICTED BY GORDON HOME

Part 3.

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

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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 strategetic 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 _Musee_ 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 innundation, 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 abbatiate 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 Raguenel, 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 consenescence 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 reverbrating 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 Montgommery, 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 Guielmus 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 siezed 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.

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