

## BROWNING'S SUMMERS IN BRITTANY.

WITH PICTURES BY GEORGE WHARTON EDWARDS.



AT A ROADSIDE FOUNTAIN.

**T**O wander from place to place in a country in which Robert Browning spent many summers, almost following his steps; to seek those spots which furnished themes for some of his best-known poems; to see the bits of landscape mirrored by his verses; to find the home of a hero he has praised or of a legend he has framed; to note the people and the customs observed by him, the types that impressed him; in short, to bring together a few

scenes and events among a peculiar people still living apart from the clamor of the present century, in a province of France the inhabitants of which have never been truly French—this is the simple object of these pages.

Mrs. Browning died on June 29, 1861. On July 19 Mr. Browning wrote to his friend Leighton: «I shall go to some quiet place in France to get right again. . . . I don't mean

to live with anybody, even my own family, but to occupy myself thoroughly," etc.<sup>1</sup> On August 17 we find him at St. Enogat, near Dinard.

To one who knows Brittany it is not surprising that, of all the provinces of France,

out being made aware of the peculiar charm an obscure tradition, an old tale, or a family record grown musty in its hiding-place, had for him, and of the good use he made of such material. Brittany teems with such matter; we shall see what use he made of it.



A PORNIC MAIDEN.

this should have been Mr. Browning's choice. Brittany at that time was almost unexplored by foreigners. It had no association with that life now closed for him. The simplicity of Breton life and its solitude were attractive to one wounded in spirit, seeking to "get right again," and desiring only occupation. No one can read the poems of Robert Browning with-

<sup>1</sup> The extracts from letters are quoted from Mrs. Orr's "Life and Letters of Robert Browning."

For nearly every town in Brittany has its legend, as each commune possesses its own style of *coiffe*. Every woman of this province may be designated, as to her locality, through the particular head-dress she wears.

And nature here seems in accord with the spirit of its legends. She is mysterious, marvelous. A magical influence seems to pervade everything. The forests are solemn. It seems easy to believe them enchanted.

It is a country of quartz and granite, covered with wild heather, eternal oaks, savage ravines, and black mountains, and sown with landscapes that would have enchanted Vergil—a country historic and marvelous.

This, then, is the country that Browning sought in his trouble, and here for half a dozen summers he lived and dreamed and wrote. He knew the legends of the country, appreciated the best qualities of the Bretons, who little knew what manner of man lived among them «*takin' notes.*»

Near Dinard, which is to-day the most fashionable summering-place of France, is St. Enogat, of which Browning wrote (August 17, 1861): «*The place is singularly unspoiled, fresh and picturesque, and lovely to heart's content.*» One thinks of the poet, with an ache in his heart, taking lonely walks on the cliffs that border the sea; but St. Enogat did not make him «*right again,*» and he never returned.

The summer of 1862 found him in the south, at Biarritz, where there was less loneliness and more distraction. But he writes: «*This town is crammed with gay people, of whom I see nothing but their outsides. For myself, I have got on by having a great read at Euripides, the one book I brought with me.*» Mrs. Orr tells us that here he worked at «*The Ring and the Book*» («*the Roman story, you know,*» he wrote in the same letter), the poem having been thought out years before at Casa Guidi.

Although Biarritz was distracting, Browning turned his face Brittany-ward the following summer, and it is from «*St. Marie, near Pornic,*» in lower Brittany, that he wrote on August 17, 1863. One wonders how he chanced upon Pornic, that «*un-Murrayed fishing-hamlet.*» Few foreigners even now know the place, save through his poem «*Gold Hair,*» which embodies the legend of Pornic. Few towns of Brittany have had their legends so honorably framed:

. . . The beautiful girl, too white,  
Who lived at Pornic down by the sea,  
Just where the sea and the Loire unite!  
And a boasted name in Brittany  
She bore, which I will not write.

And then the legend continues, which has it that this proud maid of Pornic, with a great reputation for sanctity, was in reality a miser, and therefore lost her paradise. For, years after her pompous burial, when the floor of the church was being repaired, it was found that the coffin had fallen to pieces,

and that coins were hidden away in the golden hair which had been the girl's pride, and which she had begged might remain undisturbed after her death.

The verses describing the Pornic maid and her burial are those of a veritable impressionist, done in white and gold:

. . . Dead lay she;  
Her parents sobbed their worst on that;  
All friends joined in, nor observed degree:  
For indeed her hair was to wonder at,  
As it spread—not flowing free,

But curled around her brow, like a crown,  
And coiled beside her cheeks, like a cap,  
And calmed about her neck—ay! down  
To her breast, pressed flat, without a gap  
P the gold, it reached her gown.

It was on a September morning, just thirty years after Browning's first summer at Ste. Marie (which is in reality only a hamlet at the extreme end of the town), that we wandered through the streets of Pornic in search of the spot where once stood the little parish church of St. Gilles. Alas! the well-to-do folk of Nantes have discovered the utility of Pornic as a summering-place, and have trampled out with their villas and promenades all that was quaint and lovely. We sigh for the vanished simplicity of the old Pornic whence Browning wrote: «*I live upon milk and fruit, bathe daily, do a good morning's work, read a little with Pen and somewhat more by myself, go to bed early and get up early—rather liking it all.*»

The coast, so desolate in 1863, now swarms with the gay Nantese; and old St. Gilles, where in the space by the altar was buried the girl of the «*Gold Hair,*» has disappeared.

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge  
'Mid the yellow wreath, nor disturbed its hair:  
E'en the priest allowed death's privilege,  
As he planted the crucifix with care  
On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

And thus was she buried, inviolate  
Of body and soul, in the very space  
By the altar; keeping saintly state  
In Pornic church, for her pride of race,  
Pure life and piteous fate.

The Pornic legend is redolent of the peculiar Breton flavor. The unsuspected sin of avarice bears its sinister fruit, springing from the gold hair coiled, «*ay! down to her breast.*»

The same savor exists in another Breton legend, one of the best-known in the province—the legend of Notre Dame de Folgoët. It

is diametrically opposed to that of Pornic in thesis and dénouement, and has the quality of illustrating original virtue. As a usual thing, the Breton looks at things through a lens of somber coloring. The legend of Notre Dame de Folgoët is so characteristic and so famous that we give it as it is told and sung in the Celtic language in lower Brittany to-day. It has been translated into the French by M. Villemarqué.

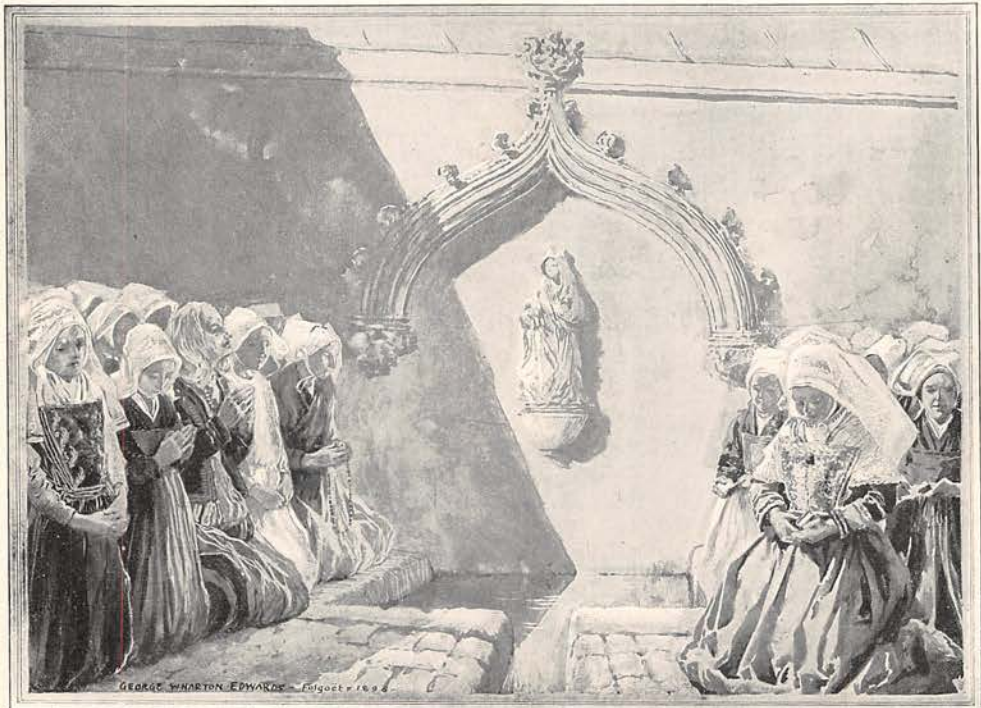
In the year 1315 there lived in Brittany a poor innocent named Salaün. After the death of his parents, who had always been very poor, this poor child sought the solitude of the forest, in which there was a fountain. He was thinly clad, barefoot, and had only the earth for a bed. He begged his bread from day to day, speaking only two words—«Ave Maria.» In the coldest weather he plunged every morning into the fountain, always singing his little song to the Virgin. When he was cold he swung himself in the branches of the trees, singing as he swung, «Ave Maria.» From all these strange ways of behavior, people called him Salaün the Fool. Thus he lived forty years, offending no one. Finally he fell ill, and died. It was told that the Virgin herself nursed and comforted him. Dying, he repeated always the sweet name of Mary. He was found dead near the fountain, and was buried by his neighbors. And there sprang from his grave a beautiful, fragrant white lily, with the two words, «Ave Maria,»

traced in golden letters on the petals. The curiosity of the ecclesiastics caused them to search for the root of this wonderful lily, and it was found that it grew from the mouth of the poor Salaün.

The dukes of Brittany built a beautiful church on the border of Salaün's fountain, and it became famous because of the many miracles wrought by its waters. The source of the fountain is under the chief altar, but the pool is close by the terminal wall of the church.

Traveling from Landerneau to Lesneven, we found the famous church standing among a few forlorn hovels. The beauty of the screen separating the choir from the nave is of itself worth a visit. It and the five altars are of the granite of Kersanton—black, and almost as hard as iron, but carved beautifully by the Lamballye Frères, claimed by some to belong to the Order of Masons, and of whom, in the middle ages, Michel Colomb was master. In Brittany we see his masterpieces in the cathedrals of Nantes and St. Pol-de-Léon.

In the fifteenth century Queen Anne of France, last duchess of Brittany, made pilgrimages to Notre Dame de Folgoët. To-day the peasants flock to the famous church to celebrate their religious fêtes. Kneeling before the sacred fountain in their holiday



WOMEN PRAYING AT THE FOUNTAIN OF SALAÜN, FOLGOËT.

gowns and coiffes, they made a charming picture on that summer day when two of us made our pilgrimage to the fountain of poor Salaün, the Fool of the Forest.

Pornic is associated with Mr. Browning through yet another poem. It was here, at one of the fairs that still make glad the Breton heart, that the poet saw the gipsy who served as model for his «Fifine,» the idea of the poem being, to quote Mr. Browning's words, «to show morally how a Don Juan might justify himself, partly by truth, somewhat by sophistry.»

In this poem we have Pornic in the twilight, «the streak of Île Noirmoutier» lying off against the horizon, the spire of old St. Gilles standing high against the night sky, and the queer little burying-ground with the absurd, pathetic bead wreaths and emblems—all familiar pictures, and, like everything Browning paints, true to the life.

In the twentieth verse we have a glimpse of the strongest superstition in the Breton heart—the belief that the Virgin protects the mariner from danger. The saint,

Cold-pinnacled aloft o' the spire, prays calm the  
 seas  
 From Pornic church, and oft at midnight (peasants  
 say)  
 Goes walking out to save from shipwreck: well  
 she may!  
 For think how many a year has she been conver-  
 sant  
 With nought but winds and rains.

This Ste. Marie being the hope of the Breton sailor, one finds all along that cruel coast statues of the Virgin, or chapels bearing her name, standing on bold promontories or cliffs at dangerous points. At Paimpol, where live the quaint fisherfolk of Pierre Loti's



THE CALVARY AT FOLGOËT.

«Pêcheur d'Islande,» «our Lady» is the object of especial homage, and plays a prominent part in all the processions at pardons and other fête-days. Every fishing-boat carries a little faience statue of her, which counts for much more in the Breton mind than any marine insurance. Notwithstanding this, the graves in the Paimpol burying-ground are those of women and children; only here and there a man is buried. And we recalled the little church which Pierre Loti has made us know, as we chanced upon it one summer Sunday night; within, dotting the space darkened by the twilight, the white coiffes of widows and orphans, showing like pale stars in a dark firmament—lonely women and children, praying, while from the open door we looked upon the burying-ground with the same blue-beaded ornaments that Browning describes in «Fifine at the Fair.»

In the memorable ramble of the poem the

pair chance upon the Druid monument. Unless one has happened upon one of these monstrous, weird piles at night, it is difficult to believe how solemn is the impression given.

How does it strike you, this construction gaunt and gray—

Sole object, these piled stones, that gleam unground-away

By twilight's hungry jaw, which champs fine all beside

! The solitary waste we grope through? Oh, no guide

Need we to grope our way and reach the monstrous door

Of granite! Take my word, the deeper you explore

That caverned passage, filled with fancies to the brim,

The less will you approve the adventure! Such a grim

Bar-sinister soon blocks abrupt your path, and ends All with a cold dread shape,—shape whereon Learning spends

Labour, and leaves the text obscurer for the gloss, While Ignorance reads right—recoiling from that Cross!

Whence came the mass and mass, strange quality of stone

Unquarried anywhere i' the region round? Unknown!

Just as unknown, how such enormity could be Conveyed by land, or else transported over sea, And laid in order, so, precisely each on each.

And of the solitary, stately menhir

. . . Folk, too, . . .

Surmised the old gray stone upright there, through such tracts

Of solitariness and silence, kept the facts Entrusted it, could deal out doctrine, did it please: No fresh and frothy draught, but liquor on the lees,

Strong, savage, and sincere.

Separated from the Breton atmosphere which surrounds it, outside and beyond the Pornic stretch of land and sea which frames it, there are, of course, unforgettable lines, sentences which give the key-note of the poem, as:

Life means—learning to abhor The false, and love the true, truth treasured snatch by snatch.

Or:

Into the truth of things— Out of their falseness rise, and reach thou, and remain!

During three summers, 1863, '64, and '65, Browning visited Ste. Marie. The letter of September, 1865, given by Mrs. Orr, refers

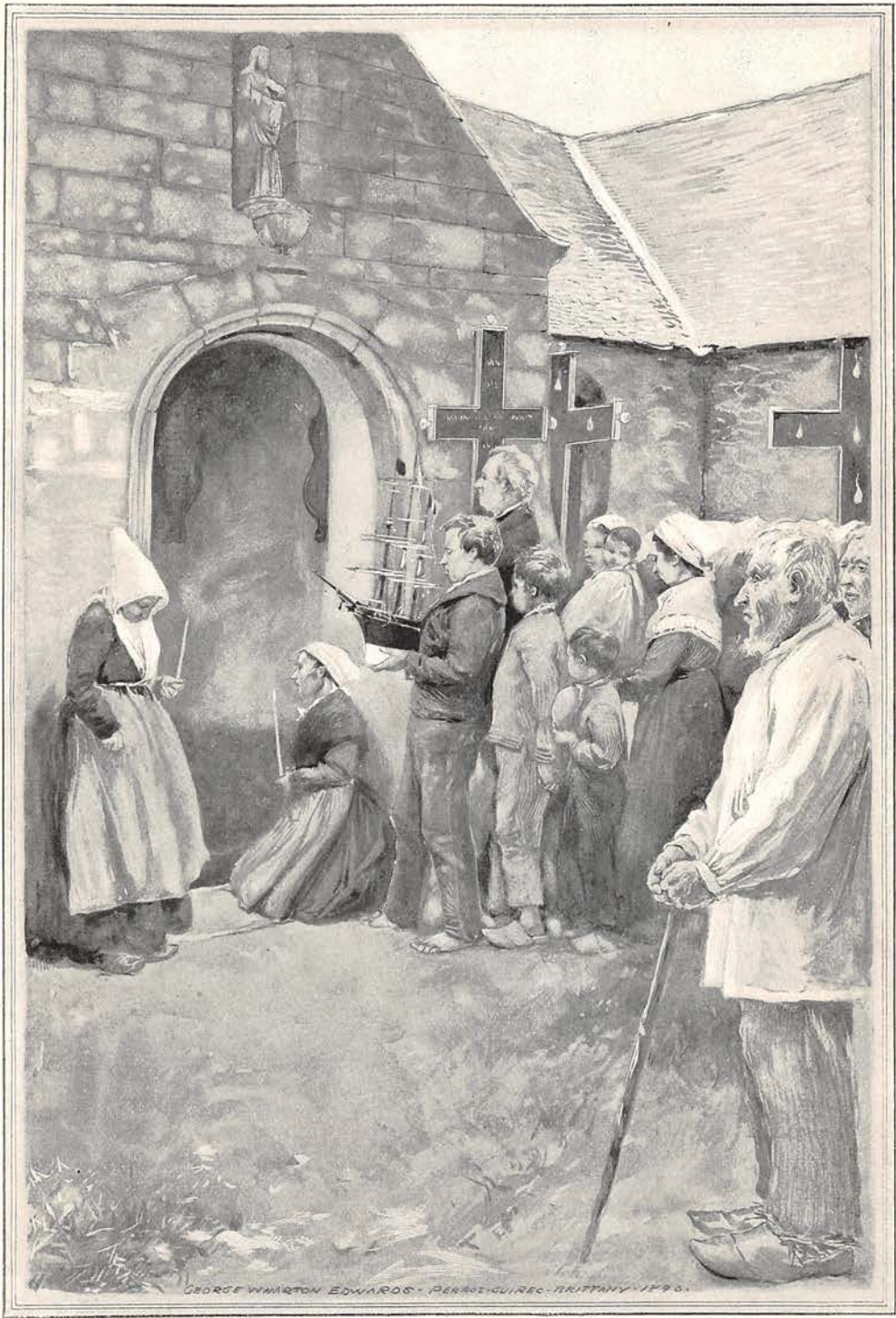
to the Pornic legend. «I suppose my poem which you say brings me and Pornic together in your mind is the one about the poor girl. If so, (fancy!) (as I hear you say). They have pulled down the church since I arrived last month. There are only the shell-like, roofless walls left for a few weeks more. It was very old, built on a natural base of rock, small enough, to be sure; so they built a smart new one behind it, and down goes this—just as if they could not have pitched down their brick and stucco further away, and left the old place for the fishermen. . . . Certain old Norman ornaments, capitals, pillars, and the like, which we left erect in the doorway, are at this moment in a heap of rubbish by the roadside. The people here are good, stupid, and dirty, without a sense of picturesqueness in their clod-polls.»<sup>1</sup>

How often it happens to one traveling through Brittany to come upon lovely little churches or chapels in most unexpected places,—sometimes on the edge, sometimes in the depths, of a forest, or on a cliff overlooking the sea,—built in the middle ages, when faith and zeal found expression in this manner! These have now fallen into disuse, though not yet into decay. Only the poverty of the people has prevented a «smart new one» from taking the place of the beautiful old church.

On our way to Folgöet we chanced upon one of these beautiful chapels, standing a hundred feet from the road, in a grove of tall trees. After long searching we found the custodian of the rusty key,—itself a relic of the middle ages,—who opened the door for us. How beautiful it all was! What simplicity, and what perfect proportions! The well-meaning Breton explained apologetically: «Of course it's very old, but we hope to be able to build a new one in its place in a few years. They tore their old church down over in Plougastel, and built a new one two years ago; but we are poor in this parish.» «Oh, no; you are not poor; you are rich,» I answered. «You have this beautiful old church. God keep you from following the fashion of Plougastel!» Of course the good soul looked sympathetically at us, as at people gone out of their senses.

It was at Ste. Marie that the poem «James

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Sharp, in his «Life of Robert Browning,» page 173, tells us that the poem «Gold Hair» was written in Normandy in 1858. Mr. Browning was in Pornic in the summers of 1863-4-5. In Mr. Sharp's «Chronological List of Works,» he puts the publication of «Gold Hair» and «James Lee»—both poems having Pornic for setting—in 1864.



GEORGE WILSON EDWARDS - PENNOL-GUIREC - BRITTANY - 1896.

ICELAND FISHERMAN OFFERING PRAYERS FOR HIS PRESERVATION. (NEAR PAIMPOL.)

Lee's Wife» took form. Browning writes to a friend: «This is a wild little place in Britany, close by the sea—a hamlet of a dozen houses—perfectly lovely. You may walk on the edge of the low rocks for miles. . . . I feel out of the very earth sometimes, as I sit at the window, with the little church or field, a few houses, and the sea. On a week-

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,  
This autumn morning! How he sets his bones  
To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet  
For the ripple to run over in its mirth;  
Listening the while, where on the heap of stones  
The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.<sup>1</sup>

Each separate spot on this bit of Pornic shore gave the key-note and title to these



WOMEN PRAYING AT THE DRUID MONUMENTS.

day there is nobody in the village. Plenty of hay-stacks, cows, and fowls; all our butter, eggs, and milk are produced on the farm here. Such a soft sea, and such a mournful wind!» Mrs. Orr tells us that the «window» of the letter is the «doorway» of the poem.

On this autumn morning we sought the spots which Browning has framed in «James Lee.» We walked «along the beach»; we lingered «on the cliff,» and clambered «among the rocks.» Can one forget the lines:

rare groups of verses that go to make the whole of the poem.

The water's in stripes like a snake,  
To the leeward,—  
On the weather-side, black, spotted white with the  
wind.

«Good fortune departs, and disaster's behind,»—  
Hark, the wind with its wants and its infinite wail!

<sup>1</sup> Reminding one of the lines in «Pauline»:

And tongues of bank go shelving in the waters,  
Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head,  
And old gray stones lie making eddies there.



This is the «mournful wind» of the letter. And the field and the fig-tree of the third stanza:

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltness, has furled  
Her five fingers,  
Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the world  
Where there lingers  
No glint of the gold, Summer sent for her sake.

The «mayor's house,» which Browning occupied, has disappeared, or perhaps is absorbed in a modern French villa, its «clean and bare» walls doubtless given over to the inevitable stucco.

The year 1866 brought the poet to another little nook in lower Brittany—Le Croisic. His father had died in June, and his sister came to live with him. They had tried Dinard. The letter written from Le Croisic says: «We all found Dinard unsuitable, and after staying a few days at St. Malo, resolved to try this place, and well for us, since we find it serves our purpose capitally. . . . We are in the most delicious and peculiar old house I ever occupied, the oldest in the town; plenty of great rooms, nearly as much space as in the Villa Alberti. The little town and surrounding country are wild and primitive, even a trifle beyond Pornic perhaps. Close by is Batz—a village where the men dress in white from head to foot, with baggy breeches and great black flap hats. Opposite is Guérande, the old capital of Brittany. You have read about it in Balzac's (Béatrix.) And other interesting places are near. The sea is all round our peninsula, and, on the whole, I expect we shall like it very much.»

Browning has made Croisic unforgettable, not because he lived there, for the simple folk do not dream what poet dwelt among them those summers, but chiefly because «Hervé Riel the Croisickese» has been so beautifully framed in the poem. We found the «delicious and peculiar» house where the poet lived. We walked along the shore among the fisherfolk, and met his Hervé Riel more than once. We see him to-day, looking to be of the same valiant stuff as when he «up stood, out stepped, in struck» to save the French fleet on that 31st of May, 1692, at «St. Malo on the Rance.» The type still abounds on this rocky shore of Croisic.

Not a symptom of surprise  
In the frank blue Breton eyes,

exactly describes the Hervé Riel we met. Nor is the «Belle Aurore» lacking. We saw—we believe we saw—Hervé Riel, and his

Belle Aurore, and a flock of little Hervé Riels and Belle Aurores, on this September morning of 1893. It is only in this one little spot of Brittany that one finds «blue Breton eyes» (Browning makes no mistakes). A Breton historian tells us that only in Batz, Guérande, and Croisic are found the Saxon element—«Saxons that were left behind and forgotten in Brittany» after an invasion. They are tall, and have blond hair and blue eyes. The costumes of these Batz people are the gayest and most elaborate in Brittany—«the men dressed in white from head to foot,» of whom Browning writes, being those who work in the salt-fields, the one industry besides agriculture. As for the others, the women wear white dresses with red or blue sleeves, black or violet petticoats bordered with velvet, fine red stockings, coiffes attached under the chin, with barbs floating over the shoulders, and lace collars or fichus daintily fluted. The costume of the men is not less picturesque: three or four waistcoats of different lengths and of all colors, large plaited trousers, the hat broad-brimmed and raised proudly in front, but falling over the eyes when they are in mourning. This was the ancient costume of the people of Batz; to-day it is somewhat simplified, but still very picturesque.

The rocky coast of Croisic is a fit training-school for such sailors as this typical Hervé Riel; and after knowing the Croisickese sailors, one is not surprised at the gallant deed of Browning's hero. The affectionate qualities of these people are shown in Hervé Riel's reply when asked to name his reward; he begs a whole day's holiday, that he may visit his wife, whom he calls «the Belle Aurore.» In other respects the poet has given us in Hervé Riel the true flavor of this strangely interesting Breton, the Croisickese, brave, handsome, and gentle. Mr. Browning, while at St. Malo, found the name Duguay-Trouin everywhere. A street and a quay bear his name, his statue stands in a public square, and his portrait is in the museum. It would seem that he has honors sufficient without the bit of glory that really belonged to the «simple coasting pilot» of Croisic. While in Croisic, Browning came to believe that the real hero who saved the French fleet in 1692 was no other than Hervé Riel of Croisic. He searched the records of the admiralty, established the fact, and determined to honor a deserving name, thus honoring likewise the modest little town. The poem was written, but lay in a drawer until 1871, when, desiring to contribute to

the Paris Relief Fund, for the aid of the people after the siege, Mr. Browning sold it to the «Cornhill Magazine» for one hundred pounds, and this was his contribution.

The late M. Guizot, in his course of lectures on the poems of Robert Browning at the College of France in 1892-93, said, in connection with this poem: «Mr. Browning said to me that it was not without a purpose that he selected this poem, which was a tribute to the bravery and modesty of a French sailor, thus bringing it to serve other brave Frenchmen who also had shown real heroism.» Browning himself says of «Hervé Riel»: «I venture to call my verses good for once.»

Mr. Browning, with his sister, returned to

Crowd closer, let us! Ha, the secret nursed  
 Inside yon hollow, crusted roundabout  
 With copper where the clamp was,—how the burst  
 Vindicates flame the stealthy feeder! Spout  
 Thy splendidest—a minute and no more?  
 So soon again all sobered as before?

Our log is old ship-timber, broken bulk.  
 There 's sea-brine spirits up the brimstone flame.

Why resist the temptation to put alongside these Croisic lines those other that bear the title «By the Fireside,» in «James Lee's Wife»?

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,  
 Oak and pine?

Oh, for the ills half-understood,  
 The dim, dead woe  
 Long ago  
 Befallen this bitter coast  
 of France!  
 Well, poor sailors took  
 their chance;  
 I take mine.

A ruddy shaft our fire  
 must shoot  
 O'er the sea;  
 Do sailors eye the case-  
 ment—mute  
 Drenched and stark,  
 From their bark—  
 And envy, gnash their  
 teeth for hate  
 O' the warm, safe house  
 and happy freight—  
 Thee and me?

But it is with Croisic that we have now to do, where the poet sits before the ship-wood blaze. He recalls his boyhood, when, watching the sparks and flames of a log fire, he was wont to conjure heroes therefrom.

By that old nurse-taught  
 game which gave the  
 sprites  
 Each one his title and  
 career.



A PEASANT DINNER.

Croisic in the summer of 1867. In his «Two Poets of Croisic» he takes occasion to honor two well-nigh forgotten men of that out-of-the-way town. The first ten verses of the poem sing of the log fire—the blazing ship-wood sending forth the many-colored flames:

He sings now of the wild, weather-beaten  
 Croisic:

Launched by our ship-wood, float we, once adrift,  
 In fancy to that land-strip waters wash,  
 We both know well! Where uncouth tribes made  
 shift



A MAN OF BATZ AND A WOMAN OF GUIMILLIAN.

Long since to just keep life in, billows dash  
Nigh over folk who shudder at each lift  
Of the old tyrant tempest's whirlwind-lash,  
Though they have built the serviceable town  
Tempests but tease now, billows drench, not drown.

Croisic, the spit of sandy rock which juts  
Spitefully northward, bears nor tree nor shrub  
To tempt the ocean, show what Guérande shuts  
Behind her, past wild Batz whose Saxons grub  
The ground for crystals grown where ocean gluts  
Their promontory's breadth with salt: all stub

<sup>1</sup> One of the Breton poet Brizeux's best-known poems — «Les Goélands» — describes a custom of Croisic. The young women come down to the shore to bid adieu to their lovers who are sailing away to the Spanish coast.

Le matin, à la mer haute  
Les jeunes gens du Croisic  
Vont s'embarquer sur leur bricks:  
Mes sœurs, chantons sur la côte  
Goélands, Goélands,  
Ramenez-vous nos amants!

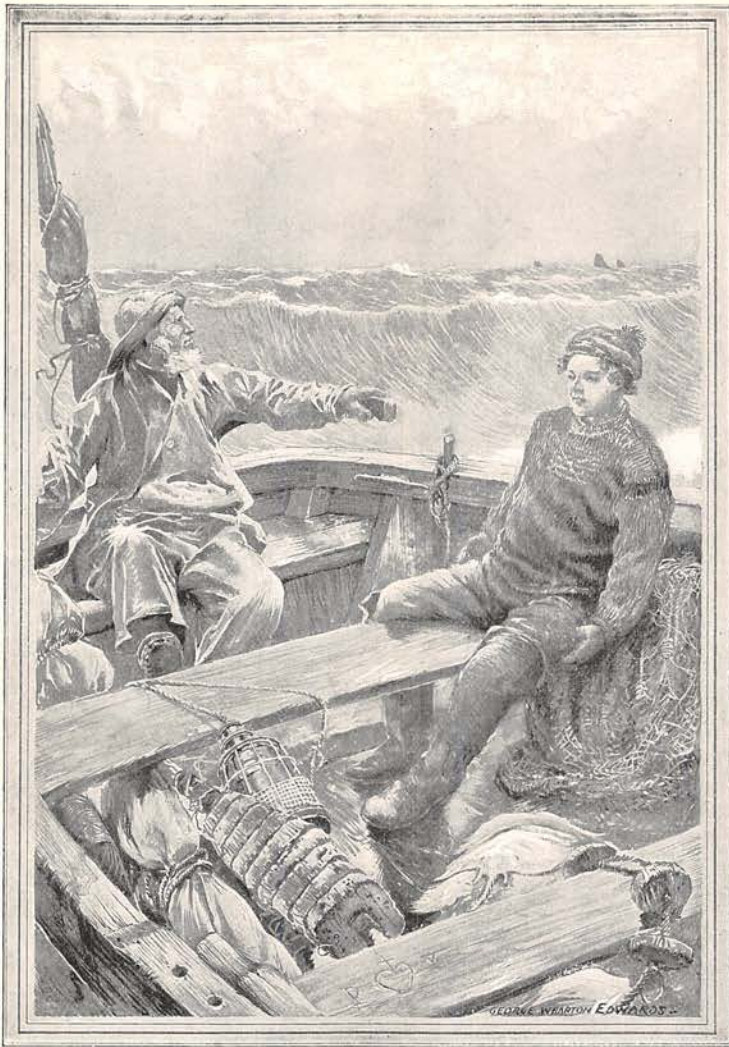
Of rock and stretch of sand, the land's last strife  
To rescue a poor remnant for dear life.

Could any words more truly picture this  
cruel coast, jutting «spitefully northward»?  
And «what Guérande shuts behind» is a  
veritable bit of Italian softness—balmy air,  
tender sky, fruitful, verdant, with perfume  
of violet and spreading green of fig-trees;  
and, between Guérande and Croisic, Batz,  
with its salt-marshes.<sup>1</sup>

The ships sail away. The sea-gulls follow the ships. The  
maidens, weeping and dancing in circles on the shore, sing:

Goélands, aux ports d'Espagne  
Guidez nos chers matelots,  
Et parlez leurs sur les flots  
Des filles de la Bretagne.  
Goélands, Goélands,  
Ramenez-vous nos amants!

The faithful sea-gulls have followed the ships. The  
maidens, alas! stretch their arms in vain toward the sea.



DOUARNINEZ FISHERMAN AND SHIP-BOY.

In the fourteenth verse the poet writes:

And still so much remains of that gray cult,  
That even now, of nights, do women steal  
To the sole Menhir standing, and insult  
The antagonistic church-spire by appeal  
To power discrowned in vain, since each adult  
Believes the gruesome thing she clasps may heal  
Whatever plague no priestly help can cure:  
Kiss but the cold stone, the event is sure!

Not until the twenty-second verse do we actually arrive at the "two poets."

. . . Poets, if you please!  
What, even there, endowed with knack of rhyme,  
Did two among the aborigines  
Of that rough region pass the ungracious time  
Suiting, to rumble-tumble of the sea's,  
The songs forbidden a serener clime?  
Or had they universal audience—that 's  
To say, the folk of Croisic, ay, and Batz?

Then follows the story of the fair—René Gentilhomme:

Appropriate appellation! noble birth  
And knightly blazon, the device wherefrom  
Was (Better do than say)! In Croisic's dearth  
Why prison his career while Christendom  
Lay open to reward acknowledged worth?  
He therefore left it at the proper age,  
And got to be the Prince of Condé's page.

Not until the sixty-seventh stanza does the poet take up the legend of the two poets of Croisic, and in the sixty-ninth stanza he says:

Paul Desforges Maillard, Croisickese by birth.  
. . . Cease to scan  
The ways of Providence! See Croisic's dearth—  
Not Paris in its plentitude—suffice  
To furnish France with her best poet twice!

The chief success of the second poet seems to lie in the fact that he «brought Voltaire upon his knees.» Moreover, he furnished Piron with the subject of his comedy «Mé-tromanie»:

. . . There you'll find  
He's Francaleu . . .  
As for Voltaire, he's Damis.

To a lover of Brittany the poem is congenial. To a poet or critic the gem is the epilogue beginning:

Such a starved bank of moss  
Till that May-morn,  
Blue ran the flash across:  
Violets were born!

Another important place mentioned is Quimper, the chief city of that department of the province called Finistère.

Near Quimper is the forest of Broceliande, still murmuring of past mysteries. In this forest stood the palace of marble and gold in which the fairy Vivian imprisoned Lancelot of the Lake; and the Bretons will tell you that under a rock in Broceliande the enchanter Merlin is still sleeping. In this forest is that «Endless Valley» where the souls of perfidious lovers forever wander. After Quimper we find Mr. Browning on that bit of Brittany coast where once the «Roi d'Ys» held his court. He writes from Audierne: «At Quimper we heard, for a second time, that Audierne would suit exactly, and to it we came, happily, for (suit) it certainly does. Look on the map for the most westerly point of Brittany and of the mainland of Europe; there is niched Audierne, a delightful, quite unspoiled little fishing-town, with the open ocean in front, and beautiful woods, hills, dales, meadows, and lanes behind and beyond, sprinkled here and there with villages, each with its fine old church. Sarianne and I have just returned from a walk, in the course of which we visited a town—Pont Croix—with a beautiful cathedral-like building amid a cluster of clean, bright Breton houses; and a little farther on is another church, Notre Dame de Comfort, with only a hovel or two round it, worth the journey from England to see.»

Not far from Audierne, where the Bay of Douarnenez is, formerly stood the city of Is. Here King Gradlon had established his court. St. Gweno-lé, a disciple of St. Corentin, who had the knack of promenading on water dry-shod, was much beloved by Gradlon, who, it ap-

pears, had a special talent for discovering saints and a great admiration for miracles. He gave to Gweno-lé the celebrated monastery of Landévénec, in Finistère, the ruins of which are still to be seen. Gweno-lé was a frequent visitor at the palace at Is, and considered it no breach of hospitality to preach against the iniquities practised in that city, even denouncing the daughter of Gradlon, most iniquitous of all. The peasants of Huëlgoat, in Finistère, still point out a gulf into which this wicked princess Dahut threw her superfluous lovers.

Finally God, so the legend goes, decided to punish the crimes of the people of Is, and Dahut became his instrument. The sluice-gates of the city could be unlocked only with the golden key which the king always wore hung about his neck. Dahut, having promised this key to her lover, who had planned to destroy the city, stole it from her father's neck as he was sleeping. Shortly after the sea rushed in and overwhelmed the city. At the moment of danger St. Gweno-lé ran to the king, and warned him of the peril, urging him to flee. Gradlon mounted his horse, taking his daughter with him; but he was overtaken by the waves. At that crisis a terrible voice commanded him to



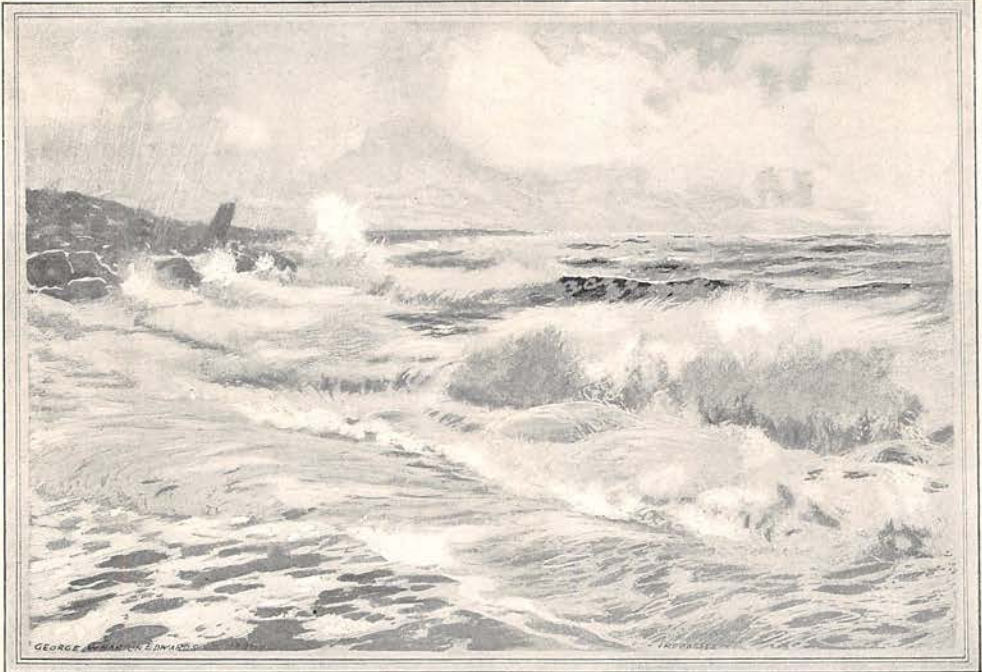
THE ENDLESS VALLEY—FOREST OF BROCELIANDE.

separate himself from his daughter, who was behind him in the saddle. The king recognized in this the voice of God, and abandoned his daughter to the waves. The sea, satisfied with its prey, receded; but the city of Is was swallowed up, with all its inhabitants, and the next day only the Bay of Douarnenez was to be seen.

It is in this bay, near the Pointe du Raz, that the Breton sailor still believes he sees

fishermen's cabins, to beg for burial. To-day the priests of this coast go out in boats to say the mass for the dead in presence of the people, who kneel praying on the shore.

Normandy was the scene of Browning's «Red Cotton Night-cap Country.» The summers of 1870, '72, '73, and still others, were passed in this province. Normandy—thrifty, industrious, adaptive, successful, glib, forgetful of her folk-lore, keeping pace with the



TRÉPASSÉS—THE BAY OF LOST SOULS. (DRUID MONUMENT TO THE LEFT.)

under the green waves the ruined streets and monuments of this Breton Sodom. He even shows the print of the foot of King Gradlon's horse on a rock near by!

This bit of Brittany coast teems with weird and gruesome legends. Not far from the Pointe du Raz is the Baie des Trépassés. The legend of this bay dates from the Druids. The flavor is one that appeals to the Breton taste and fancy, and has been carefully preserved.

According to the Celtic legend, the Druids after death embarked from this coast to be transported to the Île de Sein, a wild island off Pointe du Raz, there to be buried. So savage is the sea at this point that many corpses were shipwrecked. These souls, weeping in great anguish, walk up and down the shore of this bay; often the skeletons of these wrecked creatures knock at the doors of the

century—is thoroughly French. Brittany—land of beautiful churches, of poetic traditions, sanctuary of the legend, cradle of the Druids—still celebrates the brave deeds of her heroes and of her saints. She still sings the old songs to her little ones. Her young men and maidens still dance the gavotte at the pardons. She has not yet lost her faith in her fairies. To her simple peasants the animals still talk on Christmas nights, and on the eve of St. Toussaint the dead walk in solemn procession through the fields. The table stands, has always stood, and always will stand, by the one window, and the benches are on each side. The beggar is always welcomed, and at weddings the custom still holds for the bride to dance with the beggar, for the sake of the good luck that is sure to result.

A. M. Mosher.