

BOUVIGNES.

A BELGIAN HOLIDAY.

BY WILLIAM SHARP. IN TWO PAPERS.—FIRST PAPER.



O many thousands annually leave London between the beginning of June and the end of October for a more or less circumscribed holiday, that it is a matter for wonder so very few ever find their way to "fresh fields and pastures new." Un-

doubtedly this mainly results from two causes: first, the uncertainty as to an entirely new country or district, whether it will be liked, whether lodging will be easily obtained, whether it will prove moderate, and so forth; and secondly, from hesitation as to the amount of expense liable to be incurred. There are many, for instance, who, having only three or at most six weeks at their disposal, go to watering or inland places in the north of England or in Scotland, under the impression that while such holiday places are more expensive than the more or less frequented resorts nearer London, they are yet much more moderate than places of interest or beauty within a day's reach across the Channel, that is, resorts which, like Dieppe, Boulogne, St. Malo, Ostend, &c., are not as commonplace from familiarity as Margate, Brighton, or Hastings.

But as a matter of fact there are many places in Normandy and Brittany and in midland Belgium quite unknown to the vast majority of those who wish at once to spend their brief holiday in some place before unvisited, a place combining beauty of landscape with at least fair lodging, and above all not entailing a large expenditure. It is, however, to midland Belgium that the writer would on this occasion draw attention, more especially that portion of it which lies in the beautiful valleys of the Lesse and the Meuse.

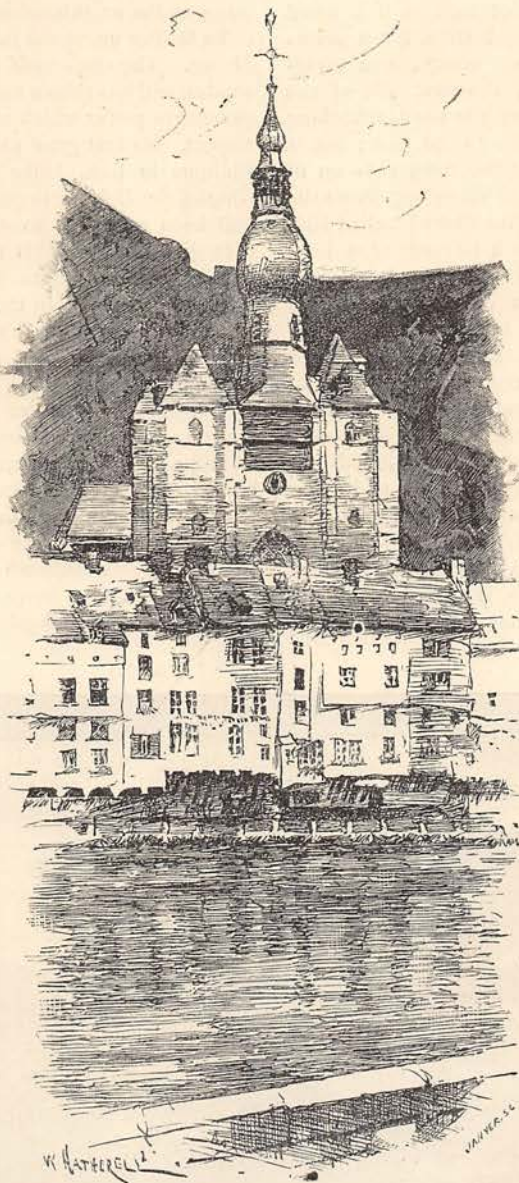
It may at once be stated that Dinant-sur-Meuse is the most fitting starting-point for those who wish to spend some pleasant days or weeks up these valleys, or for those who desire to go right into the heart of the Ardennes country, to Rochefort and La Roche; or it can itself be made the goal for a stay of ten days or so. Dinant is within an easy day's reach from London by Dover and Calais or Ostend, the route being direct

to Brussels, and from thence *viâ* Namur by branch line, and the fare can easily be calculated by adding on about four shillings to that from London to Brussels, the second-class fare from the latter to Dinant being about 4f. or 4½f. At Dinant itself the rates of *pension* vary between 7½f. and 10f.; at the Hôtel des Postes the charges being 9f. or 10f. according as the rooms have a river frontage or not. But after leaving the "Gate of the Ardennes," as some one has rather vaguely styled this town, living, in good hotels, may be calculated at from 4.50f. to about 7f. (3s. 9d. to 5s. 10d.) daily, at which moderate rate (of course not including "extras" or luxuries) it will be seen that one can live better and much more moderately than in the expensive North British hotels, or even than in private lodgings if there be several of a family sojourning together.

The route from Brussels, especially after leaving the picturesque and interesting old town of Namur, is a very pleasant one; but although the train skirts the right bank of the broad clear Meuse nearly all the way to Dinant, no fair idea can be obtained from the carriage windows of the beauty of the wooded heights and frequently precipitous cliffs that, now on this side and now on that, line the river nearly the whole way. If a stay over-night has been made at Namur, or if times otherwise fit in, a still pleasanter transit to Dinant may be made by taking the small steamer that once or twice a day sails thither from the former; and, if this is done, both a much better idea of the riverside beauty will be obtained, and glimpses

be had of villages and châteaux and interesting natural features which mostly escape the observation of passengers by train. About five miles above Namur the village of Dave, with the huge precipitous rock rising near its ancient château, is passed; then

comes Frêne, with strangely-shaped rocks and several grottoes worthy of a visit, if the traveller be in the neighbourhood at any rate; then Rouillon, with its landmark of precipitous rock called La Roche aux Cornelles from the numbers of jackdaws which have their nests within its clefts; then Yvoir, at the junction of the Boucq or Bocq with the Meuse, and thereafter a beautiful stretch of some three or four miles, with the ruins of Montaigle, and further on of Crève-cœur to the right, and of Poilvache to the left, till Bouvignes is passed, and Dinant is seen stretching along both banks of the river, the main portion of the town picturesquely sheltered beneath a huge precipitous limestone cliff, crowned at its summit by a disused fortress, and breaking at its further extremity into gradual slopes covered with beech and oak. Of the hotels at Dinant undoubtedly the best, both for accommodation and the views it commands, is the Hôtel



FROM THE BALCONY OF THE HOTEL DES POSTES, DINANT.

des Postes. This hotel is close to the railway station and also fronts the river, its cheerful balcony looking out on the most picturesque portion of the old town, and, from its position, commanding whatever sunset aspects may reveal themselves down the valley of the Meuse beyond the heights of Poilvache. In connection with the Hôtel des Postes is the Belle Vue, situated

on the opposite side of the bridge, and also a hydro-pathic establishment on the hill-side on the southern bank of the river, on the road to Bouvignes. The Tête d'Or is another good hotel, more moderate than the Postes, but neither so cheerful nor so commodious, though it has the advantage of beautiful garden-paths opening from behind up the steep rock-side.

At first sight Dinant does not look as if it could possibly contain over 7,000 inhabitants, for it seems to consist merely of two long streets, one straggling in a broken line along the west side of the river, and the other, constituting the town, stretching along the base of the high cliffs to the east; but it will ere long be discovered that the town runs on in this narrow fashion for a space extending (from the weir above Bouvignes, through the district called Rivage, to the picturesque Roche à Bayard) to at least three miles. Some of the old houses are picturesque, notably the Hôtel de Ville, an old German-looking, yellow-lued building on the boulevard facing the Meuse; but this cannot be said of the church (dating from the thirteenth century as to foundation) with its high bulbous tower rising 200 feet up the sheer cliff immediately behind it. This cliff, which can either be ascended from behind Notre Dame by 400 steps cut in the rock, or by a more gradual and shaded path through semi-private grounds on the hill-slope about half a mile further on, is well worth scaling; for the view, if not so picturesque as that to be obtained from the river below, is extensive and full of interest. The fortress itself, however, is not ancient,

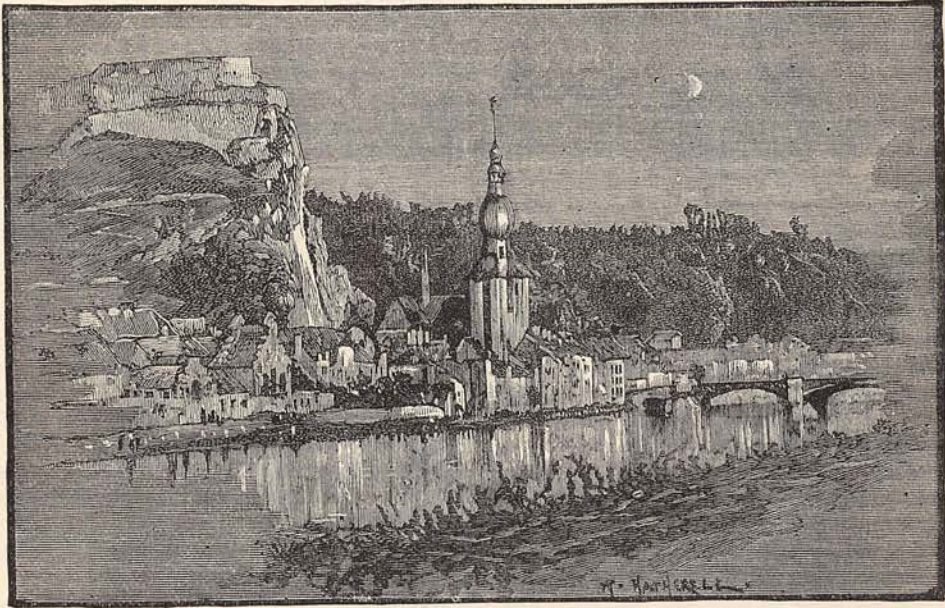
for it was only erected at the time of the eventful revolution of 1830, and it is now wholly disused, though by no means yet incapable for defensive purposes if emergency should arise. The Meuse at Dinant is broad and deep enough to admit small steamers and heavily-laden barges ascending the river for many miles, but it is not nearly so suitable for boating or bathing purposes as the neighbourhood of Anseremme, about two miles farther up, at the junction of the Lesse and the Meuse. The town itself has gone through some vicissitudes, and has shown more than once that sturdy regenerative power which always commands interest and respect. Its first great calamity befell it in 1467, when Philippe le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, and his son Charles the Bold, besieged the town, whose inhabitants had been guilty of treating the former's commands with disrespect and his threats with indifference—an independence of spirit that was severely punished when Dinant fell into the duke's hands, for not only was the town given over to the pillage of the soldiers, its walls destroyed, and its houses finally set on fire and burned, but a cruel edict was given whereby 800 of the inhabitants were tied in pairs, thrown into the river, and drowned before the eyes of the savage Philippe. Recovery, however, and renewed self-confidence must have been rapid, for less than ninety years later it was again given over to pillage and destruction by the French soldiery under the Duc de Nevers. Again in 1675 it suffered capture by the French, but with not quite so severe results. But, despite the foreign enemies or neighbouring powers who cast fre-



CHATEAU DE CREVECOEUR.

quent jealous eyes upon the industrious little town whose copper-wares (*dinanderies*) were so widely known and purchased, the inhabitants could yet not refrain from quarrelling with their most immediate neighbours, and local chronicles record many a rival

A pleasant walk or drive of a mile or two further leads to Yvoir, a small village situated at the junction of the Bocq with the Meuse; and about an hour's distance from hence is the famous castle of Montaigle, the finest ruin in Belgium, which is well worthy of a

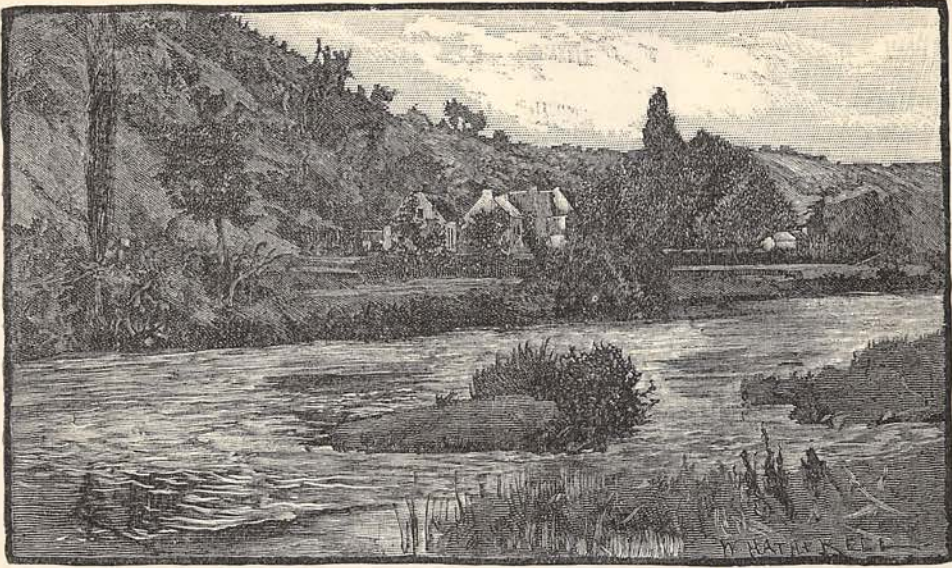


GENERAL VIEW OF DINANT-SUR-MEUSE.

onslaught and ill-adventuring struggle between the hot-blooded "Walloons" of Dinant and Bouvignes.

The latter, now a mere village, at one time even surpassed its rival in importance; its recuperative powers, however, did not prove so strong. To the ordinary visitor who strolls to it from Dinant the main attraction lies in the picturesque ruins of Crèvecœur crowning the rocky hill immediately behind the village to the west. The castle of Crèvecœur plays a romantic part in the history of the occupation of this district by the French in 1554, the time of the second destruction of Dinant referred to above. The legend—and there is nothing to disprove its asserted facts—runs that during the siege of the town, when the defence was at last wholly restricted to the small garrison within the castle, three of the most beautiful women of Bouvignes entered the tower of the latter, determined to take what part they could in the defence, even if that should only amount to the encouragement their presence would give to the besieged, including their three husbands. A prolonged and determined resistance ensued, but ultimately the last of the garrison perished and the siege was over; but ere the savage French soldiery could gain entrance to the tower the three fair women, preferring death with their husbands and friends to the outrage and cruelty they were sure to experience from their enemies, together sprang from the summit of the tower of Crèvecœur, and, in sight of the beleaguering troops, were hurled, maimed and dead amongst the rocks at the base of the steep slope,

visit if for nothing else than the view down the valley of the Floye. But in the case of ordinary pedestrians Yvoir will probably be found far enough, and these should not neglect to see the intermittent spring which is situated in a meadow at no great distance from the village. Whether on foot or in a carriage the return to Dinant should be made by the opposite side of the river, crossing the latter by the large bridge connecting Yvoir and Moulins—the latter a foundry, but formerly a Cistercian monastery—and before long a lofty and craggy rock will be reached, on whose high summit the extensive ruins of Poilvache command views in all directions. Poilvache was destroyed so long ago as the middle of the sixteenth century, in the same year that Dinant and Crèvecœur also succumbed to the French; and though there is now little of interest in the ruins themselves, they are worth the ascent for the splendid panorama that stretches northward, eastward, and westward, while the wooded southward view is best comprehended from the neighbouring ruin of the Tour de Monay. Resuming the return road to the south, the uninviting hamlet of Houx is passed, then the influx of the small Leffe is crossed, and shortly afterwards Dinant is re-entered. Other picturesque walks (which are also *diligence* routes) can be taken along the road to Ciney, starting from the town on the eastern side of the river, or along that to Philippeville, which winds south-westward from behind the railway line a little beyond the station.



ON THE LESSE NEAR ANSEREMME.

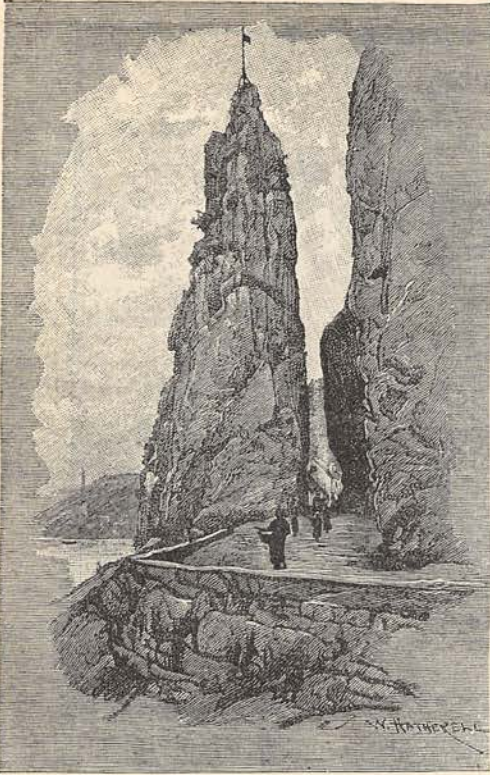
A BELGIAN HOLIDAY.

BY WILLIAM SHARP. IN TWO PAPERS.—SECOND PAPER.



row aperture that even *diligences* and heavily-laden waggons have to pass. The cliffs above are beautiful at all times, but especially in the soft afternoon glow do their rugged slopes, with reef-like spurs of limestone breaking through the thin soil and scanty grass often to a considerable height, appear to advantage. Here the "suburb" of Rivage ends, and, the Bayard passage traversed, Anseremme is seen extending irregularly along the eastern bank till it ends in a picturesque promontory overhung by high wooded cliffs. It is to Anseremme all visitors, if they be wise, will come after having spent a few days at Dinant; indeed it is best to come direct to the latter, the omnibus journey between the two places being at once short and very inexpensive, and all arrangements as to visiting the places before-mentioned being as easily made at the

one place as the other. To the visitor the Hôtel Beau-Séjour may almost be said to comprise all Anseremme, for the village is but a collection of small houses at irregular intervals, and in no way interieres with the semi-privacy of the Beau-Séjour. This hotel belongs to the same proprietor as the Hôtel des Postes at Dinant, but is only open from May or the beginning of June till the end of autumn: it is beautifully situated on the Meuse-side, its verandah looking right down upon the river beneath, to the Bayard Rocks on the right, and on the left to the openings of the Lesse and Meuse valleys above the bridge covering the influx of the former into the latter river. Moreover, the board and accommodation are good, and the rate of *pension* moderate—about 7*f.* a day, all included. The great drawback to Dinant for those who care for boating or bathing is the considerable distance to be rowed up before houses are left behind, and beautifully wooded or island banks take their place; but this is obviated by living at the Beau-Séjour, for in the neighbourhood of Anseremme the boating is even more delightful than on the Upper Thames; the bathing is capital, and never dangerous to those who have even moderate swimming powers; while both rivers, but more especially the Lesse, literally swarm with trout and other fish. The fishing is everywhere free, as indeed are all the paths by wood and field and hill. A good boat (*chaloupe*) can be obtained for 30*f.* a month, or for about twenty for a fortnight, and can be kept in front of the hotel; and, indeed, this is the only way boating may be depended on, for there are only one or two *chaloupes* in the neighbourhood to be let by the hour, and these are seldom easy to procure,



ROCHE A BAYARD.

owing to their owners rarely being at hand. On the whole the Lesse will be found the better river for fishing, especially that portion of it lying between the shallows opposite the ruined foundry (about half a mile up) and the ford which is crossed in going to Walzin; but in nine cases out of ten the natives seem to prefer using bait instead of the fly, finding that the former requires less skill and is equally efficacious owing to the great number of fish with which the river is supplied. Good fishing can be obtained on the Meuse also, especially above the weir and round the promontory on which the quaint little church of Anseremme stands.

An excursion by rowing-boat up the Lesse cannot be extended beyond a mile or so, owing to the shallows of the ford already mentioned; but any one staying at the Beau-Séjour is certain to row up again and again between its lovely wooded banks—wooded so densely that at times it seems as if the *chaloûpe* were urging its way on

liquid air through a wilderness of quivering green leaves. A shallow, over which the stream races rapidly, will be noticed opposite the old foundry and present mill; and here it would be as well (if there be more than one in the boat) for those not rowing to alight on the jut of land that forms a little bay, while a single rower takes the boat over the few yards of shallows. But a long day's sail may be taken up the Meuse; and one of the most delightful ways of visiting the Château de Freyr, and the curious grotto in the neighbourhood, is to go thus by water. Immediately above the Pont à Lesse there is a triple weir across the Meuse, and by the right side of this a large lock which the keeper will open at any time free of charge, though a small gratuity should be given if frequent entrance is required. Having gone through the lock, the boat meets with no other obstruction of the kind for miles upward, but passes first the queer little church of Anseremme, with its small and ridiculously tilted stumpy spire; then underneath lofty and precipitous rocks, amongst whose worn limestone crags hundreds of crows have their noisy settlements; then along grassy meadows, richly flowered in spring, and gay on their banks with trailing honeysuckle and red and white dog-roses, with snowy blackthorn and sweet-scented may, with elder-blossom and tall meadow-sweet; then past a long green island on the right; then again wooded heights; and at last the old château, with its quaint Dutch garden, is seen on the river-side, the opposite banks consisting of a series of huge rocks and craggy cliffs, in great part wooded, save from their midway slopes. The château itself can only be visited if the family be absent; but this is no great loss, as the chief interest in connection with it lies in the neighbouring grotto, which is reached by a beautiful path of about a mile in length, and which, though neither so



CHATEAU DE LA ROCHE.

impressive nor anything like as extensive as the famous Trou de Han at Rochefort, is decidedly worth a visit. Beyond the Château de Freyr the river winds onward, towards Waulsort and distant Givet on the French border, no part of it, however, being more picturesque than the wooded precipices which here overhang it on the left, and above which, though unseen, the village of Falmignoul lies, amongst the waving corn-fields that stretch for miles across those green uplands which so much resemble the fertile downs of southern England. The road to this village is one of the most beautiful walks or drives that can be taken from Anseremme, which is left by the high-road beginning at the bridge, and which winds upwards for miles along a gradually ascending road on the summit of those rocks which overlook the Meuse; but either can be made still pleasanter by branching off to the left before reaching Falmignoul, by the somewhat steep and rugged side-road that leads to Walzin, returning by way of the Lesse. In this way the most impressive parts of the beautiful valley of the Lesse will be seen, for the carriage-road winds downward through a semicircle of hills clad with the green vanguard of the Forest of Ardenne. When the level is reached, the direction to the right should be taken, in order to visit the Château de Walzin, one of the most picturesquely situated châteaux in Belgium, though this itself forms a pleasant walk or drive from Anseremme along the banks of the ever-beautiful Lesse. Having arrived at the hamlet of Walzin, a man will soon be found to conduct visitors by means of a rough *chaloupe* about a hundred yards or so up the Lesse, to a spot on the opposite bank where the best view of the castle is to be obtained. Situated on a lofty and curiously caverned rock, the mediæval-looking château commands a magnificent prospect of the course of the Lesse to the east and west, and of the wide uplands stretching away behind, towards the Royal domains of Hordenne; while sheer below its windows the river winds along underneath sweeping tree-boughs, seemingly striving to undermine the partially hollowed

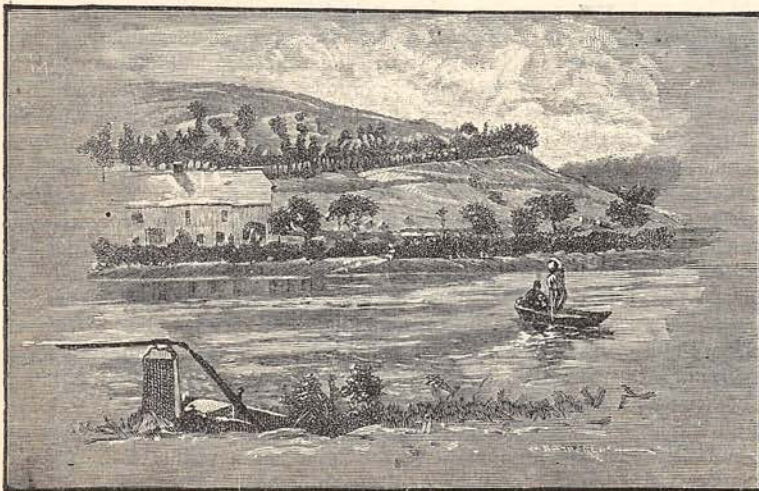


CHATEAU DE WALZIN.

cliff-rock itself. Leaving Walzin behind, the upper Pont à Lesse is passed; further on the ford is crossed, and the homeward route is taken along a road fringed

most of the way with shadowy trees, and overhung in great part by a wilderness of moss-covered rocky heights.

If Dinant may be called the door of the Ardennes, Anseremme may fitly be considered their actual threshold. Yet to have seen Anseremme, even to have explored the valley of the Lesse, is not to have seen the Ardennes; to do this it is necessary to go to La Roche, which may be said to be to the valleys of Belgian Luxembourg what Callander is to the Trossachs. La Roche, however, is somewhat difficult of access from Anseremme; the pleasantest way, if time and other con-



FERRY AT ANSEREMME.

siderations permit, being to drive from the latter by the beautiful Route de Château d'Ardenne, past the village of Cielles to Rochefort. The last-named, though much better known than La Roche, is in no way comparable to it, but at least a whole day should be spent there in order to visit the famous Trou de Han, the finest series of limestone caverns in Europe. These wonderful subterranean caves and passages must be seen, for they cannot efficiently be described; and however great one's disappointment may be with over-lauded Rochefort itself, it is safe to say that no such experience will result from a visit to the strange and impressive Grottes de Han, a visit that in itself occupies from three to four hours. Leaving Rochefort for La Roche, a train can be taken to Melreux, on the line to Liège; and from thence a *diligence* runs through a lovely country along the side of the Ourthe for about sixteen miles (the *diligence* fares here as elsewhere in the Ardennes being very moderate), till Cielles is seen on its hill-top, and then La Roche itself clustering beneath its picturesque and ancient ruined castle.

At the two hotels of La Roche the *pension* is as moderate as it could well be. At the Hôtel des Ardennes, which is on the whole the better, it is 4.50 f. a day, and at the Hôtel du Nord only 4f., including beer (3s. 9d. and 3s. 4d.). Rooms should be engaged at least a week beforehand. Fishing is not perhaps

so plentiful as on the Lesse, but of much better quality. The Ourthe is too shallow for bathers, except just above the Rompré Mill (Moulin du Grand Rompré), about half a mile from La Roche—but here a delightful swim in deep water can be obtained.

The Castle of La Roche has had many eventful passages in its history, from the days when it was first roughly constructed by the vanguard of the Saracens, since then occupied by Pepin, and sacked by the Huns, the Vandals, and the Visigoths, to the days when it formed a hunting-seat for the kings of France—still later, when it belonged to Napoleon, until now when its extreme old age is guarded by the Belgian State.

La Roche, in the centre of the hilly Forest of Ardenne, is the very heart of the Ardennes themselves; and perhaps no place in the north of Continental Europe commands so many great valleys in immediate proximity, possesses so many lovely walks, or is so picturesquely situated in itself. But further cannot now be said of this gem of Belgian Luxembourg, or of the beautiful Ardennes themselves; yet it may be stated that even La Roche is within an easy twenty-four hours' journey from London by Calais or Ostend, and that any English people undertaking such a journey will consider their holiday one of the pleasantest they have ever spent.

WITNESS MY HAND.

A FENSHIRE STORY.

By the Author of "Lady Gwendolen's Tryst."

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

"This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,
May prove a beautiful flower when next we meet."

SHAKESPEARE.



T was more than six months before I saw Helen again. I cannot say that Uncle Rivers did not ask me up to town, but he only gave me one of those "general invitations" which need great faith in one's inviter or great assurance in one's self to accept. I possessed neither, so I stayed at home, and consoled myself with Helen's letters and with the hope of her coming to us at Christmas.

So the summer flushed and waned, and all the level land yellowed with harvest, and then lay bare and brown under chilly skies, till winter spread a fair white

mantle over its unloveliness and desolation. And through all the changing days that brought us from May's sunshine to December's frost, but that passed so quietly that change seemed the last thing their eventless course could bring, I kept my cousin's image warm in my heart, and when I missed her most, said inwardly, with a smile, "She will be here at Christmas."

John Erlston had been away all the summer fishing in Norway, so that he and Helen had had no opportunities of meeting in town; and since his return he had been entirely at home, going about the estate with Sir John, hunting when the weather permitted, and, I was bound to admit, flirting with Louisa Seymour as if he had never gathered forget-me-nots by Westrea Mere to give to Helen Rivers. But I had not forgotten his frequent visits while she was with us—visits that had dwindled to their normal number again now. I had not forgotten the evening walks on the bank by the Mere, the music he had seemed to find so sweet, the talks in which he had shown an interest and animation that were curiously absent from his languid flirtation with Miss Seymour.

The little drama I had constructed for Helen and John might be only in its first act still, but I believed it only needed the impetus of her coming to pass swiftly to its third. I had not forgotten the flower she