



## OUR HOLIDAY IN QUIMPER.



IT WAS about six o'clock on a bright morning in August, 1859, that our lumbering diligence jolted into the quaint old town of Quimper, into

the very heart of it—the market place—and on market day at its busiest time. The storm of noise that assailed our ears was absolutely deafening; the whole place was swarming with men, women, and children, live stock of all kinds, all and each at their loudest, buying and selling, disputing and chaffering, the indescribable sounds of pigs, sheep, horses, donkeys, cocks and hens, each and all in their several way adding their quota to the general hurly-burly. It was a strange awakening after the long night's weary drive in the comfortless carriage, and seemed like a continuation of the fitful slumbers of the night.

But few dreams were ever so bright as the scene before us. The curious houses elbowing each other into all sorts of shapes and sizes, the high roofs peering over each other's heads, the endless piles of fruit and vegetables; above all, the wonderfully rich and varied costumes of the people themselves, all combined

to make a scene of enchantment, from which we could scarcely tear ourselves away, even when the much-needed hot coffee and omelette were placed before us.

We were only too glad to sally forth again to see what the place was really like. The sun shone brightly down the narrow streets. Our Breton holiday was all to come; it lay in the future, and this was our first day. As soon as the day was sufficiently advanced for us to present our letter of introduction, we called at the "appartement" of the kind French artist, with many apologies for such an early intrusion. But although it was only nine o'clock, Monsieur and Madame G. would not allow that any excuses were necessary. They were courtesy itself, and entered into all our plans with the kindness of old friends; this kindness did not surprise us, as Monsieur G. had already won golden opinions from many an English artist for his sympathetic aid. Our great desire was to find a pretty home near the town, but not in it.

The place was ancient and picturesque, and is little altered in our own day. But everything has its drawbacks. It was impossible to saunter through those dear old streets without an attendant sprite in the shape of a headache.

As we unfolded our views, our listeners ominously shook their heads.

"Dear mademoiselles, such rooms are not to be had; the place is full of soldiers, and there are no lodgings left."

What was to be done? Adorable as are the narrow streets of old houses, all bending into each other's arms at the top in a fond embrace, there are reasons why the open country should be preferred; perpetual headaches are too dear a price to pay for the pleasure of living even in the crookedest streets, or the most exquisitely tumble-down houses.

Had we not been to St. Malo, where we had a company of fine headaches in waiting all the time we explored that interesting, but unfragrant, city? Were not its streets uninhabitable, except on the ramparts, in consequence?

So, with many thanks for their kind offers of help, we went forth to try for ourselves. Like the man in the fable, we put our own shoulder to the wheel, and leaving the town, headaches and all behind us, we struck out for the country.

We crossed a green, studded with large trees, and found a rural suburb on a height near the river, and there, in Rue Bourg-lisbourg, we saw *appartements garni à louer* written on a low dead wall in front of a pretty little villa. Madame was at home, the terms were moderate, and we decided at once on engaging the little house, which became our French home for many weeks.

A small paved courtyard in front, gay with creeping roses and flowering plants, all in bloom, a long drawing-room, rich in small mirrors, pictures, clocks, and velvety rugs, with which we skated over the *parqueterie* floor from one Louis Quatorze chair to another; adjoining it a curiously small dining-room, leading, in its turn, to quite the smallest kitchen in Europe. It had, of course, the obvious advantage that, standing in the centre, everything was close at hand, and certainly, from the quality of the dinners that subsequently issued therefrom, we were strongly reminded of the magician's casket, out of which proceeded the tents and battle array of a whole army.

But then we had Marie to be our cook and general factotum, and all for the ridiculous sum of three francs and a-half a week—about three shillings English money—without any food whatever. The terms were mentioned to us in a tentative manner, as if to say, "The sum is, I own, excessive, but you can have her for less if you like." She boarded and lodged in her own home, and never had we more faithful and loyal service; not only did she provide us with the most excellent dinners, the fragrance of which would have made an epicure hungry, but the dinner on table, as Royalties and other great persons have music during a banquet, so we had our dear old Marie to amuse us with her endless tales of Breton life and manners, often

accompanied with songs, dances, and appropriate action. She reminded us of Molière's Toinettes—so blunt, so amusing, and full of character. She was never at fault; her mother-wit was wonderful—a sort of French Mrs. Poyser. How she would have charmed Dickens! he would certainly have immortalised her in one of his works. But all this is a digression. Having accomplished the mighty feat of engaging our house and our servant, we dined at our hotel, and then called again on our French friends with the good news of our success. Now all that remained was to ask that they would crown our happiness by spending the evening with us in our new home.

There is nothing so amusing as wandering through a new old town, a really old one, especially when to that is added the joy of shopping. Madame G. introduced us to her tradespeople, where we spent a very pleasant half hour in ordering the heterogeneous articles necessary. Tea, of course, we had brought from England; but not, alas! our bacon; and on seeing the horrible stuff they called bacon, we much lamented our neglect. I can see the shop now. So dark—as unlike an English shop as possible, everything in confusion, and the shopwoman speaking a sort of French patois hard for our English ears to catch. After our shopping we had a drive. The scenery was not very interesting; open, hilly country, like parts of England, with here and there an old château or a farmhouse. The most remarkable feature in the drive was the vehicle itself, which was so uncomfortable, and the harness so worthless, and the horse such a poor, half-starved looking creature, that we were very thankful to be safe on foot again. But our friends were to arrive, and we had to prepare to meet them, or what would they think of their English hostesses?

While we were getting ready, our Marie (duly installed) told us of the arrival of our marketings, and not our marketings alone, but the whole of the shopman's household had turned out to see us, and in they came, a party of seven, each laden with two or three parcels, prepared to give and receive all the information we and they could want. Amazement had filled their souls that we should have come to their secluded old city. That we should have come for health and painting was all too simple a reason to satisfy them; however, as there was no other, they had to make the best of it. It was very amusing. The picture comes before me as I write. The worthy tradespeople sitting all round the small dining-room, parcels in hand, perplexed in the extreme how it should come to pass that three English ladies should select their place for a holiday. They were very intelligent and courteous, and after somewhat allaying their burning curiosity in our regard, they were very glad to give whatever information might be of use. It was one more of the singular experiences of our first day's introduction to Brittany, which concluded with the arrival of our visitors, Monsieur and Madame G. and their young daughters.

Nothing could be more kind and genial than they all were. In Monsieur G. we found an artist of the most refined and poetic feeling, a man of education buried alive in a place where there was no one outside his own home with whom he could have two thoughts in common. He entered at once into all our requirements and difficulties about painting, and offered to show us whatever his rare artistic skill had discovered to paint.

We had many a good story to hear and to tell, so that what with discussing pictures and music and our plans

for the future, our evening came to a close all too soon. After many expressions of kindness and goodwill—expressions which on their part, we since learnt by experience, were no empty words, but were fully endorsed by deeds—our friends of that morning's introduction took their leave. They said on going: "How strange it is, you came into Quimper this morning not knowing a soul, and in the evening you have received friends in your own home." But so it was, and thus ended our first day in Quimper.

After this happy commencement of our holiday, we entered the next day on our life of exploring the various picturesque places near, under the escort of our kind friends. We found Quimper to be delightfully situated in the midst of hills and forests abounding with game and rivers full of fish, so that many English had been attracted thither, and it was agreeable to find on all sides our compatriots well spoken of.

The cathedral of Quimper is the largest and most celebrated ecclesiastical edifice in Brittany, all other churches of note having been destroyed at the Revolution. The interior of the cathedral suffered considerably also from the same cause, and looks very meagre in consequence. The exterior is very beautiful, the delicately sculptured porch, the long narrow windows, thirty feet high, by which the towers are pierced, and above all the lovely twin towers, erected a few years ago by voluntary contributions, are among its most noticeable features. On a Sunday morning the interior presents an extraordinary spectacle; the vast nave and transepts are filled with figures; but such figures! Conceive men and women like those in the old pictures by Van der Meulen animated, only add more lace and brighter colours with their market baskets,



VIEW OF THE CATHEDRAL.

and you will have a faint idea of the worshipping peasants in the cathedral of Quimper.

The cathedral is dedicated to St. Corentin, a notable saint, much revered in Lower Brittany. A curious equestrian statue of King Grallon stands on the top of the western gable of the nave, surrounded by numerous interesting armorial shields, which were all destroyed at the Revolution.

A strange ceremony used then to be practised with reference to this statue. Annually, on St. Cecilia's day, the Bishop of Quimper, accompanied by his clergy, ascended to the platform on which the statue is placed, with a number of musicians and singers, and after performing several orchestral pieces, one of the town archers mounted the crupper of King Grallon's horse, provided with a bottle of wine, a glass, and a napkin. Pouring out a bumper, he offered it first to the King (as in duty bound), then drank it himself, and wiping the monarch's mouth, cast the glass to the ground.

The assembled multitude underneath then struggled to catch the vessel, and the bishop offered one hundred crowns to whoever presented him with the glass unbroken; but it appears the prelate was never called upon to pay this money. The observance ended by placing a branch of laurel in the hand of the statue, and singing a hymn. One is reminded of the curious custom which has been observed from time immemorial of the clergy and choir singing a hymn at the top of the tower of St. Mary Magdalen, Oxford, at four o'clock on the first of May in the morning.

We had fortunately timed our visit for the gayest month in all the Breton year, the month of August, and we had scarcely arrived before a fair was held in all its motley splendour on the banks of the Odet. There was the usual variety of costumes, as it was a gathering of people from all the neighbouring villages, and each place has a different dress, and there were games of all sorts; there were swings and refreshments, cheap toys, and garments. The prize of a fine sucking-pig was offered to the valiant boy who could walk to the very end of a long, slippery pole which projected horizontally over the river. Long and loud were the shouts of laughter as one boy after another, lured by the prize, after a hopeless stagger, fell into the water, to be caught up by men in boats, and retire ingloriously to the rear. Then there was a miracle play, acted in this fashion:—

There was a large booth, written over the top "La passion de notre Seigneur. Un sou." There was the usual crowd outside of touters urging you to go in and see. On entering there was a stage, with seats in front, and two or three musicians. A number of peasants were inside to witness the spectacle; it consisted of eight or nine scenes from the life of our Blessed Lord. They were represented by young children, from six years of age to ten, who stood in the attitudes proper for the scenes represented, but did not speak; music played before each scene. When St. Peter's denial came, one of the musicians imitated the cock crowing. At the sadder parts of the Passion there was sobbing. In about twenty minutes, when it was over, all went out quietly, and a fresh audience was then admitted.

The whole scene was a very happy one; the weather faultless; the river was alive with boats, but it was, perhaps, the prettiest thing in the day when the boats, laden with peasants, returned home in the evening to their distant villages, singing as they went.

As one great object of our journey was to make some studies of those Breton interiors which had attracted so much attention in the artistic world, our kind cicerone, Monsieur G., introduced us to the farm at Penanguer—formerly a chateau, now tenanted by the widow

Barbe Bidou. We often went there, and made several studies of the interior and exterior of her picturesque old house; moreover, we grew very fond of our peasant hostess. The heart of a lady beat under her peasant's garb; she delighted to anticipate our wishes, never desiring any return but the pleasure of being with us. Like the clerk in Chaucer, "Gladly would she learn and gladly teach." She told us an infinite variety of news about home life in Brittany, and in return listened with unflagging attention to any account of England. But the subject of all others which charmed her most was our Queen; that the Sovereign of our great Empire should have been a fair young wife and mother was to her the strangest of romances.

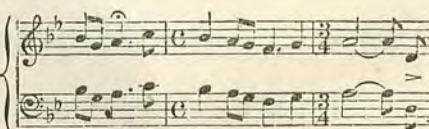
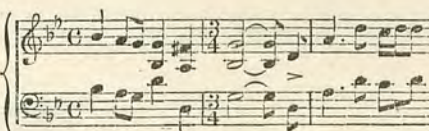
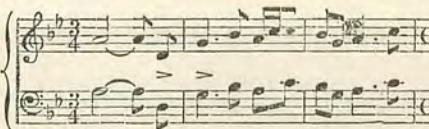
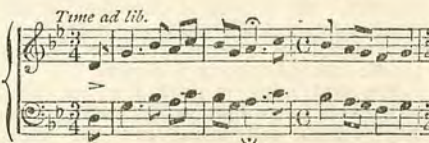
We often sat there in the afternoon listening to the snatches of old Breton melodies, whether chanted by the men threshing out the corn with a machinery that would have been old in the days of King Grallon, or sung by the women as they sat in a circle on the ground, bending over their lovely embroidery that can be had nowhere else. The two following melodies are what we heard at the time:—

#### OLD BRETON TUNE.

SI J'AVAIS ASSEZ D'INSTRUCTION.

"Wala studj."

C. A. Macirone.



One day I was painting indoors, and as the girl, sitting on the hearth, was very busy scraping at some old pieces of cloth, I ventured to ask what was the object of her labours. She showed me one basket full of a sort of fluff, of all shades of blue and brown and black, and another basket full of shreds of dresses, too old to wear. She was actually engaged in scraping up her old clothes into fluff, intending to convert it into yarn, and thence into cloth again. You may dispute or doubt my statement, if you please; I don't expect anyone to believe it. I can only say that such was the fact. I thought how impossible it would be to carry out the same process with any old clothes on this side of the Channel. I won't say that these dresses were as thick as boards, for boards are sometimes thin, which the dresses never were, but could easily have stood upright without the aid of the sturdy forms they usually encircled. But those dresses, how we admired them! What splendid colours! rich browns and blacks and glorious blues of all shades, bordered with close stitches in silk all the colours of the rainbow, relieved with an edge of black velvet. Cosy, warm, comfortable, tight-fitting dresses, with white caps of every conceivable variety of shape, edged with deep lace and dainty frills for Sundays, and real silver ornaments, consisting of a heart and cross, hung round the neck. Dresses that were the delight of artists to paint, and gave an impression of homely common sense, and self-respect that was most refreshing. We thought with a sigh of our London poor. How different!

Of course, one of our first visits was to the market early in the morning (the advantages of the well-known early bird being never better illustrated than in marketing), escorted by our faithful Marie. There were provisions of all sorts, and of the freshest. Baskets full of tempting hot milk loaves, wrapped in snow-white linen; sardines glittering like jewels amid the fern-leaves in which they were packed, caught that morning from the sea; fruit, flowers, and poultry of all sorts. As our Marie talked Brezonec, she had the advantage of us, and as the sellers invariably demanded twice as much as the article was worth, the jabbering was endless, but while Marie chattered for us, we had plenty to do in watching the endless variety of costumes. The provisions were very cheap, the best meat sixpence a pound, and curiously small joints.

One morning as we wandered near the cathedral we went into a small restaurant, where the hostess, a stalwart dame in a blue petticoat, black stockings, bright-coloured apron pinned across the bosom, and a snow-white cap, was busy at the fire preparing the noonday meal of galettes or crêpes, made of buckwheat. From an earthenware pot she poured upon a griddle (a round iron plate about twelve inches across), under which blazed a fire of dry gorse, some batter made of buckwheat, which she smoothed out with a wooden spoon till it was about the thickness of a pancake; in fact, it was just like our English pancakes, only thinner and larger. After turning it with a flat shovel till it was sufficiently brown, she placed it in a dish, which was soon heaped with a smoking pile of cakes. The hostess placed basins of milk on the table for all the guests, who now proceeded to break their crêpes into them. When taken with the rich milk of the country, it has a nutty flavour; it is still nicer when eaten

with butter and pepper and salt. We took some, and it was excellent. The cost of the buckwheat is so little, that we have often wondered it was not introduced into England.

Refreshed by our meal of buckwheat, we went on to the Château de la Forêt, once the home of an old noble family, now a farmhouse, some little distance from the town. Passing the old, quaint houses near the cathedral, we follow the course of the River Odet, which flows between cornfields, poplars, and brushwood, the twin spires of the cathedral growing fainter in the distance. At last we came to the courtyard of the château, which was a regular farm-yard litter. The exterior of the château preserves little of its ancient character, with the exception of the doors and windows. The hall is large and of noble proportions; the rafters are of beautifully carved oak; a handsome fireplace, with stone coat of arms, and carved oak panelling round the room, all falling away from damp, give an air of faded grandeur to the place. The floor is of mud and stone, very uneven; *lits clos* are round the room, and hanks of yarn and dried skins hang from the carved rafters, while pigs and poultry trot in and out, quite at their ease.

"To what base uses we may return."

A newel staircase leads to the upper rooms, which are spacious, and ornamented with fine carvings in wood and stone; over the door of one of the bedchambers is a bas-relief in stone. The chimneys are all of stone, carved with figures of men and animals, as are also some of the doors.

In the kitchen reigned the same air of rustic plenty I had observed in other farmhouses; the *lits clos* were polished till they shone again; the dressers were covered with brilliant copper and brass vessels, and rough but picturesque old earthenware, and from the carved rafters hung flitches of bacon. There was also the high settle of polished oak, near the fire, so often seen in our English farmhouses. The house, both within and without, was so tempting a study for an artist that we stayed to draw.

As we are among old houses, I may give the story of an estate called La Barretière, which formerly belonged to a rich old maiden lady of good birth, who, finding that she was dying, called her two nephews to her bedside. First she asked the son of her eldest sister what he would do with La Barretière if it were his. Now, it happened that this young gentleman's mother had married a grocer; he was therefore possessed with very aristocratic and exclusive ideas. He replied—

"In that case, the first thing I would do would be to close it against the *canaille*."

"And what would you do with it?" she said, turning to the younger one.

"I should continue to permit the people to share with me the pleasure of looking at so pretty a place," replied the thoroughbred one.

"Then," said the old lady, "you are my heir."

So the insolent young sham aristocrat was punished for his snobbishness.

I must also add another romantic story we learnt in the following manner:

One sunny morning we were riding along the grassy borders of the river on our clever little donkeys. By the way, how do naturalists account for the activity of pigs and donkeys in Brittany being so much greater than on this side of the Channel? The donkeys run as if they enjoyed it, and the pigs, with their thin, long hind legs, and their thin, short forelegs, dash along as if the fiend were after them. Well, in the sunshine, over the grass, we listened to the tales of old Josephine, who had lived through the Revolution of '92—the great Revolution—and was so glad to find sympathetic listeners. We passed a high gate, and stopping my way with an outstretched arm and a cry, she said, "Oh, madame, there

is a place with a romance of my old days!" And she told us how the Marquis de —, the lord of that château and park, had been guillotined in the Reign of Terror, and his young wife and child escaped, no one knew whither.

When the King came back and things were quiet, an old nobleman and his daughter came to the place and bought the property, and he became loved of all the country round.

One day he saw a young man leaning on this gate and wistfully gazing on the beautiful château and park. He was a stranger and weary, and on entering into conversation with him, he found the young man so intelligent, so dignified and agreeable, that he invited him to the château for the rest of his stay in those parts.

"You had, probably, friends here, that you care for it so much, and know it so well," said the host, as he led his young guest up the avenue to the château, which seemed to him strangely familiar, though he could scarcely tell why.

"Yes," he said; "my family came from hereabouts in the Revolution."

The days passed all too swiftly, and the longer he stayed the less he liked to leave either the father, or, still more, the daughter, and the less they liked to part with him. But it was not till his attachment to the daughter was reciprocated, and he became the son-in-law of his generous host, that he was discovered to be the long-lost heir—the child who had escaped in his mother's arms, and the old nobleman to be his uncle—so that in marrying his cousin she became the rightful mistress of the beautiful old home where he, as a stranger, had been so kindly received.

The beggars are of a superior order to the mendicant tribe generally; they invariably find ready and hearty welcome from the cottagers, who offer them the best seat by the fire and a share of their frugal meal. This is requited by a liberal outpouring of the gossip gleaned in neighbouring villages. Villemarqué says, "It is very observable that while beggars are everywhere else despised as the scum of the earth, in Brittany they are honoured, and are the objects of an almost affectionate devotion. Animated by a truly Christian compassion, the Breton lavishes on them the most quaint and endearing epithets. They are 'good poor,' 'dear souls,' 'dear people,' and simply 'dear ones.' Sometimes they are even called the friend, or the brother of the Highest (maybe in allusion to those divine words, 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto Me.') However that may be, never is the beggar sent empty away. Wherever he goes, to the château of the noble, or the chaumière of the peasant, he never fails to meet with a kind reception. No sooner do they hear the sound of his prayers outside the door, or the barking and scratching of his dog, than they hasten to welcome him, and relieve him of his wallet and his staff. For him is reserved the warmest corner of the hearth, the great arm-chair, and for him food is prepared. After a little rest he sings a new song to his host, and with a light heart and a full wallet he leaves the kindly shelter. If at a wedding, he is given the best place at the feast of the poor, and the bride herself waits on him." If he be rich in legends and can sing, his company is particularly acceptable, for the Breton peasant has a great passion for legendary song.

There was a striking illustration of this when Brittany was ravaged by cholera, and the peasants abandoned themselves to despair. In vain did the authorities print and circulate thousands of placards throughout the towns advising them how to act. They were treated as waste paper, and the disease was spreading fast, when a bookseller hit on the expedient of turning the medical men's advice into jingling rhyme. The effect was instantaneous.

The verses were speedily circulated through the land with such good results, that, to use their own words, the cholera was *chansonné hors de la Bretagne*, showing the truth of the Breton proverb that the poet is stronger than the three strongest things, evil, fire, and tempest.

The mere fact that the beggars are the wandering ballad singers, storytellers, and newsmongers of a very thinly inhabited country, where the inns are scarce and the farm produce very cheap, would account in some measure for their ready welcome wherever they go; especially when it is taken into consideration that few Bretons can read, and that all their mental food consists in the religious and heroic legends and ballads that have been handed down from father to son from time immemorial. As for printed literature in Bregouzec, the language of the country, *there is scarcely any whatever.*

(To be concluded.)

## VARIETIES.

KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.—Knowledge is the parent of love; wisdom love itself.

PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY.—The virtue of paganism was strength; the virtue of Christianity is obedience.

ON THE LORD'S DAY.—Have a special care to sanctify the Lord's Day: for as thou keepest it, so will it be with thee all the week long. Make the Lord's Day the *market* for thy soul; let the whole day be spent in prayer, repetitions, or meditations; lay aside the affairs of the other parts of the week; let the sermon thou hast heard be converted into *prayer*: shall God allow thee six days, and wilt thou not afford Him one?—*John Bunyan.*

THE GOOD OF EVIL.—Open evil, at all events, does this good: it keeps good on the alert. Where there is no likelihood of an enemy's approaching, the garrison are apt to slumber at their post.

UNDER A CLOUD.—We often live under a cloud; and it is well for us that we should do so. Uninterrupted sunshine would parch our hearts; we want shade and rain to cool and refresh them. Only it behoves us to take care that, whatever cloud may be spread over us, it should be a cloud of witnesses. And every cloud may be such, if we can only look through it to the sunshine that broods behind it.

PEDANTIC CONVERSATION.—There is an honest unwillingness to pass off another's observation for our own which makes one appear pedantic.

CONSULTING THE DEAD.—Much of this world's wisdom is still acquired by necromancy; by consulting the oracular dead.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC (p. 669).

D o v e R  
I o d i n E  
F o r r e S  
F r e s c O  
I d y l L  
C o r f U (a)  
U s h a n T (b)  
L a p i s L a z u l i  
T o l e d o  
Y u c a t a N

Difficulty. Resolution.

(a) The ancient Pheacia, celebrated for the Gardens of Alcinous.

(b) Lord Howe's victory over the French Fleet was fought off Ushant, on June 1st, 1798.

## OUR HOLIDAY IN QUIMPER.

ONE day Marie came to us in a state of great excitement and told us that her daughter's marriage was about to take place. Of course, we were anxious to hear more about it, and she, nothing loth, proceeded to tell us about her daughter's marriage, her future husband, and the coming *fête*. We were, I confess, amazed to hear of the enormous number of guests invited, but our wonder ceased when we learnt that all who came were expected to pay rather handsomely for the feast, to the mother of the bride, who contracted with the landlady of the inn for as small a sum as possible, by which means a purse was made for the young people to start them in housekeeping. This plan is only adopted amongst the very poor. After the wedding they repair to the market, where we saw a wonderful dance called *La Ronde*. It consisted of a number of people dancing hand-in-hand, forming a gigantic circle. The music was monotonous in the extreme, and the small orchestra, composed of one or two bagpipes and cracked violins, was raised on a table in the centre of the market. The dancers turn round and round with a kind of hop and step jump, the arms at the same time swinging violently to and fro. The

strain produced by the great number of dancers whirling is so great as to make it extremely difficult to retain hold of each other's hands. Many girls are obliged to give way, then follow shouts of laughter as the dancers endeavour to repair the breach by joining hands. Apart from the singularity of this dance, it is interesting from its great antiquity, being a relic of Celtic times, and is only met with in Brittany and Greece. The "Iliad" describes the dance precisely as you will see it performed to this day in both those countries. The far-famed Etruscan vases also represent the same dance.

In the words of an old Breton song, "Faudrait il traverser l'enfer, elles i'raient danser." The following description of a Breton wedding, from Jephson's charming work on Brittany, is too characteristic to be omitted:—Kerne or Cornouaille (whence Cornwall) has its character and its customs peculiar to itself. The Kernewote resembles the Tregorrois in his gaiety and light-heartedness; he celebrates all the events of social life with merrymakings, in which poetry and the popular poet, who is generally the tailor, take a prominent part.

The tailor is a sort of privileged person, despised by the men for his ugliness and

sedentary occupation. His name is never mentioned without the addition of "Saving your presence." By the women he is courted and caressed for his wit and usefulness in all the various conjunctures in which the weaker sex require a trusty and confidential agent, especially as a match-maker.

The enamoured youth is careful to secure his services in the first instance. He is the recognised manager and go-between in matrimonial negotiations, and the master of wedding ceremonies. The herald of Hymen, armed with a branch of broom, called *bazalan*, presents himself at the lady's house. If the mistress delay to invite him in, or if, turning her back upon him, she holds up a pancake before the fire on the tips of her fingers, or if the brands are placed upright on the hearth, he may as well return by the way he came, for his mission is not acceptable. But if, on the contrary, *Bazalan* be invited in before he has well done speaking, if the table be covered with the best tablecloth in honour of his arrival, then he may be sure his embassy is likely to speed. At first he sits down as if nothing particular were in question, but presently he addresses a few words to the lady's mother, who accompanies him out to confer on the



A BRETON INTERIOR.



A BRETON BRIDE.

object of his embassy. Here it is that his talents have full scope for their exercise.

He must know how to set off all the personal and other advantages of his principal in their most attractive lights. He must have tact to answer an objection, if it admit of an answer, and if not to slur it over. In short, the tailor must be master of all the arts of diplomacy on a small scale. The conference satisfactorily ended, he and the mother return, and the object of the mission is disclosed to the blushing daughter. The wedding generally takes place at the end of a month after the first opening of negotiations, and in the meantime all is bustle and activity within and without the house. The yard and threshing floor are occupied by carpenters, planing boards for the temporary tables, and hammering together trestles to support them. In the barns and attics are tailors and mantua makers, sewing away at those splendid jackets and gaiters, and embroidering caps for the wedding dresses. The *lits-clos* are polished, the linen is washed, and the copper skillets burnished till they shine like gold. The bridesmaids and grooms-men are next chosen, and on a Saturday night the whole party resort to the parsonage, where the ceremony of betrothal takes place. They thence adjourn to a plentiful supper, and next day at high mass the banns are published.

The Bazvalan, accompanied by one of the bride's relations, is now sent round to invite all the neighbours to the wedding. Being generally a great gourmand, he takes good care to arrive just about dinner-time at any house where he expects to find warm house-keeping, and after striking thrice upon the door he intones the salutation, "Health and happiness to all in this house. I come the herald of a wedding." Then he discloses the names of the intended, indicates the time and place of the feast, and finally sits down to table.

When the appointed day has arrived the yard belonging to the bride's house is filled with a merry cavalcade. At its head is the bridegroom, attended by the "best man." At an appointed signal the Bazvalan alights, ascends the steps, and improvises a song, which is answered from within by another singer on the part of the bride. In one of these songs the Bazvalan says, "I am Samson, who killed the Philistines," to which the Breutaer, or bride's poet, replies, "Knowledge is greater than strength. I received the law from Mount Sinai. I am Moses. It was I who recovered the Holy Scriptures which were lost when Jerusalem was taken. It was I who made the poems attributed to Theocritus. I was Virgil, the friend of Augustus."

This curious relic of an exploded faith was no doubt symbolical, and intended to assert that strength was the excellence of man and prudence the excellence of woman. That it is founded on very old tradition is proved by the fact that Taliessen, in the sixth century, wrote in the Myvyrian, "It was I who gave Moses power to pass the Jordan. I saw the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. I know the names of the stars from East to West." I am not aware that Shakespeare's commentators have observed the analogy between Owen Glendower's boasting vein and these national poems of Bretons, whether of Wales or America. Owen Glendower says, in *Henry IV.*, First Part—

"At my nativity

The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,  
Of burning cressets; and at my birth,  
The frame and huge foundation of the earth  
Shak'd like a coward. . . .

The heavens were all on fire, the earth did tremble. . . .

I can call spirits from the vasty deep."

Here is another proof, were any wanted, of the great master's wonderful knowledge of human nature.

To return to the Bazvalan, the following may be taken as a specimen of the ordinary dialogue:—

**BAZVALAN:** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, blessing be upon this house and joy more than has fallen to my lot.

**BREUTAER:** And what is the matter with you, my friend, that your heart is sad?

**BAZVALAN:** I had a little dove in my dove house with my pigeon, and the sparrowhawk came like a blast of wind and frightened my little dove, and I know not what has become of her.

**BREUTAER:** You seem very spruce for a man in such affliction. You have combed your fair hair (the tailor's hair is generally red), as if you were going to a dance.

**BAZVALAN:** My good fellow, do not mock me. Have you seen my little white dove? I shall never enjoy a moment's happiness till I have found my little dove.

**BREUTAER:** I have not seen your little white dove, or your white pigeon either.

**BAZVALAN:** Young man, you lie. (It must be owned the tailor is not very polite.) The people outside have seen her fly towards your yard, and fly towards your orchard.

**BREUTAER:** I have not seen your little white dove, or your white pigeon either.

**BAZVALAN:** My white pigeon will be dead if his mate return not. My poor white pigeon will die. I will look through the key-hole.

**BREUTAER:** Stop, my friend; you shall not go. I will go myself and see. (He goes into the house and returns.) I have gone into my orchard, my friend, and I have not found your dove, but quantities of flowers, lilacs, and of eglantines, and above all a pretty little rose, which blooms in the corner of a hedge. I will go and fetch it you if you like; it will gladden your spirits. (He again goes into the orchard, and leads out a little girl.)

**BAZVALAN:** Truly a charming flower—beautiful and fit to gladden the heart. If my pigeon were a drop of dew he would drop on it. (After a pause) I will go up to the garret; perhaps she has flown in there.

**BREUTAER:** Stop, my friend. (He returns with the mistress of the house.) I went up into the garret. I found no doves. I found only this ear of corn, which has been left behind after the harvest. Set it in your hat to console you.

**BAZVALAN:** As many grains as are in the ears of corn, so many young shall my little dove gently cover with her wings, and she in the midst. (After a pause) I am going to look in the field.

**BREUTAER:** Stop, my friend; don't go; you will dirty your fine shoes. I will go instead. (He returns with the grandmother.) I can nowhere find a dove. I have only found an apple; only this old withered apple, under a tree amongst the dry leaves. Put it in your pocket and give it to your pigeon to eat; he won't cry.

**BAZVALAN:** Thank you, my friend; a good apple, though wrinkled, does not lose its savour. But I don't want your apple, your flower, or your ear of corn. I want my little dove. I must go and look for her myself.

**BREUTAER:** Dear me, how cunning he is! Come, then, my friend; come with me. Your little dove is not lost. It was I who kept her in my chamber, in an ivory cage, of which the wires are of gold and silver. There she is, all gay, all pretty, all dressed out.

Bazvalan is admitted, he sits down at table for a moment, then goes to fetch the bridegroom. As soon as the bridegroom appears, the father presents him with a horse girth, which he passes round the bride's waist.

When this curious ceremony is over the Bazvalan invokes upon the bride the blessing

of God, of all the saints, of her ancestors down to her grandfather, at whose feet she kneels; then he intones over them the Lord's Prayer, the Ave Maria, and the hundred and thirtieth Psalm, beginning, "Out of the depths have I called on Thee." The bride is now led to the door by the best man, with as many braids of silver on her arms as she has thousands of francs for her dowry (a thousand francs is about forty pounds); next comes the bridegroom with the first bridesmaid. The Bazvalan leads the bridegroom's horse and holds it while he mounts. The best man lifts the bride up behind the bridegroom. When all are mounted the gates are opened, the whole party starts off for the church at a gallop, and he who arrives first receives a sheep for a prize.

When the bridal party leave the church guns are fired off in their honour (the same custom obtains in North Devon when the wedded pair return home), and all return to the bride's home, preceded by drums and tambourines. Here they find the rooms carpeted with white cloth strewn with garlands, and innumerable tables are laid both inside the house and outside. At the end of one of them is placed the bride, under a canopy of green branches and flowers. Some old man recites the *Benedicite*. Each course is ushered in by a tune of the bagpipe and a dance.

Next morning all the beggars of the country assemble at the house, dressed in their finest rags, and are regaled with the remnants of the feast. This day is called *Le jour des pauvres*, and it is indeed a noble impulse to call in all that suffer to have a share in their rejoicing. The bride herself, with her petticoat tucked up, waits upon the women; the bridegroom on the men. After the feast, the bagpipes play once more, and the most respected of the tattered group treads a measure with the bride (what a picture this would make!) while the bridegroom leads out a beggar woman. Before they go they wish the newly married

"Honour, riches, marriage, blessing;  
Long continuance and increasing."

Then as they leave the house they all recite together the usual prayers for those of the family who have departed, with the sign of the cross. This last act is never omitted by any parting guest.

I am afraid that to this bright picture it is necessary to add the reverse side of the subject. That married, the scene changes, and then the bride's lord and master is said to merit by his behaviour the character given him of contempt for the weaker sex. An old Breton ballad, sung by the peasant maids, touchingly alludes to maiden pleasures and married woes.

"Farewell! farewell, dear friends of my youth. I have thrown myself away, and exchanged a life of joy for one of pain! Sorrow and grief await me. I am but a servant now, for I am married. Then hasten, O ye who are free to Pardons, and enjoy life while you may. Farewell, dear friends of my youth. Farewell!"

There is another curious custom, that, on the first Sunday in Lent, all the women who had been married during the year had to repair, under penalty of a fine, to the church of St. Helier (this, by the way, can only have applied to those women living near the church), where they leap over a stone a foot high, singing at the same time these words:—

"Je suis mariée, vous le savez bien ;

Si je suis heureuse, vous n'en savez rien."

With all our admiration for the many fine qualities of the Breton peasant, we regret to say that they are, especially among the lower orders, very much wanting in that courtesy to women which is the mark of a chivalrous nature, and which is so common among the better class of English peasants. It is only lately that women have been allowed to dine

together with the men. Formerly they waited on the men, and had whatever might have been left after the men had gone. And in many other ways the same spirit was shown. It is common to poor humanity to err on one side or another, and while acknowledging their defects, I feel even this slight sketch of life in Brittany would be incomplete were I not to add one of the many instances of their devotion and loyalty during the great French Revolution, given from the above-named Jephson's work on Brittany, whose writings, with those of Weld, De Quetteville, Souvestre, and others, I have consulted to help my recollections of a tour made so many years ago.

Madame Gildas told me that her father had been one of the unfortunate Royalists shot in the Champ des Martyrs, and that her grandmother was one of the most zealous of those who in the first revolution had harboured the persecuted clergy, and arranged the midnight meetings in the ocean, where the people, like the early Christians in the catacombs, worshipped God with death and torture staring them in the face.

"It was in those bays and creeks which I had passed in the morning, that when the ministers of religion were hunted down, when not even a barn was to be found in which it was safe to worship God; when French soldiers occupied every village, and no clergyman might invoke a blessing on the union of the bride and bridegroom, the zeal of the people and their clergy bade defiance to the iniquitous law of the State. Midnight strikes, a flickering light shines at a distance on the ocean, the tinkling of a little bell is heard, almost lost in the grand murmur of the sea.

"Straightway from every creek, from every rock, from every little bay shoot forth long black lines, which glide over the waves. They are the boats of the fishermen laden with young men and maidens, old men and children. All steer for one point. Presently the sound of the bell approaches nearer, the distant light becomes more distinct, and finally the object towards which this throng advance with one mind appears in the midst of the waves. It is a boat, in which a priest stands prepared to celebrate the commemoration of Christ's death. Hither, certain of having God only for a witness, he has called together the surrounding parishes, and all the faithful have come to assist. All are upon their knees, between the sullenly-murmuring ocean and sky." In reading this passage from M. Souvestre's book, I thought it too romantic to be true, but my hostess talked about it as if it were quite a matter of course. Her grandmother had told her of these midnight meetings a hundred times. It must indeed have been a scene never to be effaced from the memory, and on which one who had borne a part in it would love to dwell. A gorgeous cathedral, a pealing organ, polished rhetoric, impress the mind with awe; but what are all these things to the stary heavens, the vocal worship of a congregation of two thousand confessors, responded to by the booming of the ocean, and a poor priest braving death that he may sustain the drooping faith of his persecuted flock by commemorating in the simple words of the ancient liturgy the death of Him who was the great *proto-martyr* of righteousness?

I cannot do better than end here, with this noble example of faith and courage, only adding that in the general restoration of churches we saw everywhere going on throughout Normandy and Brittany, we were reminded of the Divine promise, "They shall call on My name and I will hear them."

E. MACIRONE.

## THE OBSERVER.

By DORA HOPE.



ON September 5th the moon will be full—the Harvest Moon. It has had this name for generations past. Long before astronomers knew anything about the cause of its movements, farmers had observed that just about the time that they were bringing in their harvest, the full moon rose early, about sunset for several evenings together, so that instead of being about fifty minutes later each evening, there was only about half that difference in its time of rising for a few days before and after full moon. This only occurs twice in the year—in September and October; in the latter month it is spoken of as the hunter's moon.

There is one remarkable object in the sky, some portion of which is always visible, but which is brightest between the months of July and November. The Milky Way, as it is commonly called, is an irregular fog-like band, really composed of countless minute stars. It stretches right across the sky every evening, from horizon to horizon. In one part of its course, that which is visible now, it divides, sending off a kind of branch which afterwards unites again with the main body.

On going out early on a calm, warm autumn morning, you will frequently find grass and trees all covered with a glistening filmy substance; and in walking along, a thread seems to float across your face, which you have considerable difficulty in disentangling. Myriads of tiny spinners have been at work for hours, and these fine threads, that are only visible in certain lights, are each made of a multitude of filaments twisted together. These are certain spiders, and those about the smallest of their respective tribes (being only one-sixth of an inch long), which at certain seasons of the year are suddenly seized with an excursionist fit. Mounting to the summit of a blade of grass, or any other suitable eminence, they emit from their spinning tubes, which are kept separate the while, a number of fine filaments, invisible to the naked eye. These are spread out and carried upwards by an ascending current of rarefied air, and, uniting into flakes, they soon acquire, by the action of the current of air upon them, a buoyancy sufficient to support the spider, who then quits her hold of *terra firma*, and launches into the fields of air. This performance can only be seen under suitable atmospheric conditions. It requires a warm, calm day, the former being necessary to create a stratum of hot air near the ground, and calmness is essential, as any wind would interfere with the steady ascent of the warm air which bears the threads upwards.

The curious manners and customs of spiders altogether are most interesting; and the construction of their webs alone well repays careful watching. The threads are of three different thicknesses; first a number of strong ones are laid across from one tree to another, or whatever other holdfast has been selected. These thick threads all radiate from the centre, and are then united by rows of thinner lines. These complete the actual web, but as soon as it is finished, the spider lies in wait for any unwary fly, ready to throw a cloud of very fine silken cords over her hapless prey; and these threads are much finer than the two kinds used for the web itself. The male spider is much smaller than the female, frequently not more than a quarter the size, and the female sometimes

takes a mean advantage of its superior strength, and has a disagreeable habit of occasionally killing and eating any obnoxious male.

Spiders are the easiest to watch of any insects, as they generally locate themselves in convenient positions; but many others are quite as interesting. Ants, for instance, are a never-failing source of interest, but so many books have been written about them that there is no need to describe their ways.

Insects have no voice, that is to say they make no noise by means of the mouth; but many of them make noises with their wings while flying through the air. Those that fly the fastest, so that you can hardly see the motion of their wings, make the most noise with them; those with slower flight make much less sound. Bees, wasps, hornets, and many humble-bees make a loud humming noise with their wings, which stops when the insect alights. Gnats, mosquitoes, gad-flies, and others of the same tribe all give notice of their approach by the same means. Crickets make their well-known shrill cry by rubbing their strong top wings together in a peculiar manner; while some kinds of ants, and a few other insects, make noises by striking wood or other substances with their mandibles.

Seeds of various plants are extremely interesting and beautiful under the microscope. It is a good thing to gather them now, and carefully label and date them, and keep them for examination in the long winter evenings; for there are plenty of other things to look at under the microscope now that cannot be kept till then. Every country pond and ditch, every pool left by the receding tide, has a world of wonder which the microscope will reveal.

But there is a great deal that is interesting about seeds, to be seen without the aid of a magnifying glass. The different ways in which the seed is scattered, for instance, are most extraordinary. Some, like dandelion, thistle, hawkweed, and coltsfoot, float away their seeds by means of their tiny downy umbrellas, on every passing breath of wind. Some, like burdock and goose-grass, have tiny but strong hooks on their seeds, which they attach to any passing object, our dresses, or the fur of animals, and are thus carried along. Others burst open their seed-pods suddenly, and fling the seeds far away; gorse does this, and on a dry, hot day, when the seeds are ripe, you can hear them in all directions, like a miniature fusilade. Wood-sorrel scatters its seed in something of the same way, though its pods are differently arranged. The beak of the storkbill springs away from the parent plant when ripe; it has a peculiar habit of twisting itself. If you can find one of these twisted capsules, wet it, and lay it on a piece of paper; you will find that it will crawl along for a short distance. These are but a few of the wonderful provisions of nature for the scattering of seed; and if you had nothing of interest to look at but seed-pods alone, you need never lack amusement on an autumn walk.

