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ERRATA.

- Page 106, line 7, *for its portraits read his portraits.*
 ,, 107, line 21, *for 16 read 116.*

AN
AUTUMN TOUR IN SPAIN.

CHAPTER I.

L EFT Paris on Monday morning, September 19th, 1859, at ten, arriving at Tours, where we proposed staying the night, soon after two. It is quite a pleasure to travel by any of the principal railways in France, so punctual and well-managed are they; and the brief halt of five or ten minutes, occurring every fifty or sixty miles, might be introduced with advantage on this side the Channel. With a long journey in prospect, it is worth a traveller's while to remember, that the Guards are quite open to conviction, when argument takes the form of a couple of francs, in consideration of which they will at once conduct him to a comfortable seat,

and he thus escapes detention in the crowded waiting-room, and the final scramble for places, when the doors leading to the platform are at length unlocked.

Much of the country along the Bordeaux line is very pretty, and scarcely a village is passed, that does not recall some historical incident; but the portion of the famed Touraine we traversed is sadly deficient in attraction for English eyes, being little else than a vast monotonous plain, which frequent inundations of the Loire have converted in many places into a desert of sand and *débris*. Several fine old chateaux came into sight from time to time, among which Chambord, Chaumont, and Amboise were most conspicuous, the hasty glimpses we caught of their high-pitched roofs, and sharply-defined gables, making us long for a nearer and more lengthened inspection.

I had always promised myself, in case I ever chanced to be at Tours, the gratification of visiting Plessis, the well-known scene of Quentin Durward's earlier adventures, and as it is not more than a mile and a half from the town, it seemed feasible enough. But there are few occasions when good intentions are more easily frustrated than upon a journey, and, from

various causes, I was unable to accomplish my little pilgrimage to Plessis les Tours, one of the myriad shrines consecrated by the genius of Scott.

Tours disappointed us, exhibiting, in consequence of modern improvements, very little of the antique quaintness of an old French city, which occupied so distinguished a position in mediæval history; nor did the cathedral, with its debased western *façade*, and bare, unadorned nave glaring with whitewash, harmonize with the associations called forth by a scene so famous in the annals of the Gallican Church, as the See of St. Martin and Gregory. The choir, however, contains some painted glass of exquisite beauty, which must have been in no slight peril at the Revolution, when the vast cathedral of St. Martin was destroyed. The Hôtel Guoin is a very pretty specimen of a Renaissance mansion, enriched with sculptured coats of arms, scroll-work, fruitage, and other characteristic ornaments, though its recent restoration, and the perfect freshness of the fine-grained stone, unrelieved by weather-stain and lichen, made it difficult to believe we were looking at a building of the sixteenth century. Several of the back streets and alleys contain exceedingly curious

Death. Dec. 28th 1845 at his residence in the Kenning Lane House
Col. the Earl of Portarlington, in his 65th year. *from the*
United Service Magazine Feb 1846 p. 319

old dwellings, of the rudest construction, in wood and stone, somewhat after the fashion of the black and white houses so common in Chester and Shrewsbury; one of them being a cobbler's abode, of such scanty dimensions, that, for aught I know to the contrary, it may be the identical stall immortalized in the well-known rhyme.

Just opposite the two towers, which alone remain to give the present generation some idea of the old cathedral's size and grandeur, I discovered a glorious hostelry, not mentioned by Murray, dating apparently from the thirteenth century. I never saw so perfect an example of a mediæval inn, which looks quite venerable in its dirt and untidiness, unaffected by the lapse of time; and as I stood inside the court-yard, with every external object shut out by the embattled gateway, save the majestic forms of the Tour de St. Martin and Tour de Charlemagne, I should hardly have been surprized had Quentin Durward, or his uncle, Le Balafre, ridden in at the head of a company of Scottish archers. Feeling very proud of this discovery, which I made in a ramble before breakfast, I took Lord Portarlington to see it in the course of the morning, and he was even more delighted with it than myself.

In no part of France, wherever either of us had any time been, east, west, north, or south, did we meet with such inveterate starers as the people of Tours, who, in other respects, do not appear to be as civilized as their central position and large intercourse with the world would lead one to expect. One individual, however, a waiter at one of the *cafés* near our hotel, must be excepted from this charge. From the moment of our arrival, he seemed to take us under his special protection, turning up continually on every emergency in the most mysterious manner, as if he possessed the faculty of divining our intentions, and knew exactly where we wanted to go. If we ever chanced to be in doubt as to our way, a circumstance that happened several times, he was instantly at hand, and, having set us right, vanished again, almost before we were aware of his presence. I fear he must have sadly neglected his customers that morning, though why he should take so unwearyed an interest in our proceedings, and put himself to such trouble for our convenience, remains to this day as great a mystery to us, as his talent for appearing at critical moments. We became at last positively nervous about looking around us anywhere in his neighbourhood, for

fear of causing further trouble to our good-natured ally.

Our Hotel, L'Univers, by no means came up to Murray's recommendation, which classes it among the first in France, and we found there neither "the English conveniences" vaunted in the handbook, nor the pleasant spaciousness of the old-fashioned French inn.

Leaving Tours at two P.M. we reached Bordeaux soon after ten, after an agreeable journey, some portions of which, in the well-watered and richly-timbered pastures, reminded us of many an English landscape. Poitiers, from the beauty of its position, and the interesting churches and other buildings with which it is enriched, must be a charming place to stay at, had time permitted us—Nôtre Dame alone, with its glorious array of sculpture on the west front, being sufficient to repay a visit.

It was dark long before we entered Bordeaux, so that we missed the effect of a first impression, which may account for my being somewhat disappointed with the general appearance of the place. The bridge and quays are certainly magnificent; while the Garonne, then brimful with a turbid flood 2000 feet wide, presents a very different aspect from the Seine at Paris,

which looks sometimes as if it were all quay and no water.

The plan of the cathedral is unusual, having a nave 56 feet wide and nearly 200 feet long, without aisles. This circumstance, though in itself interesting, as another instance of the manifold elasticity and power of adaptation, so characteristic of pointed architecture, yet dwarfs the apparent elevation of the nave, and diminishes the general effect of the interior. The choir exhibits far more points of resemblance to English churches than I have generally noticed in France, a peculiarity accounted for by its erection during our possession of Bordeaux. The north transept is surmounted by two very elegant spires, each 150 feet high—the only example, it is said, of such an arrangement, in the whole of France. Our unfortunate Richard II., surnamed after the town, was baptized in this cathedral.

The various diligence offices here reminded us of our increasing proximity to Spain, by announcing conveyances to all parts of the Peninsula; while many a window, instead of the Parisian shopkeepers' stereotyped notice, "English spoken here," held out to the Spaniard a promise that within he might do business

through the medium of his own mother tongue. Lord Portarlington having some intention of taking a short run into Spain, we thought it advisable to get a copy of "Ford's Handbook" before leaving Bordeaux. Well indeed it was we did so, as that intention, which at the most scarcely contemplated even a hasty visit to Madrid, developed ultimately into a journey which extended from Bayonne to Gibraltar; through Madrid, Toledo, Plasencia, Seville, and Granada, the greater part of that distance being accomplished on horseback. That expedition forms the substance of the present publication; and if the narrative succeeds in imparting to the reader only a small portion of the enjoyment we derived from the scenes I have here attempted to describe, he will not, I hope, think his time altogether thrown away.

We left Bordeaux without regret, finding the climate damp and oppressive, and feeling anxious to reach our destination, Biarritz, without delay. The rail to Bayonne runs right through the Landes, which precisely resemble the extensive tract of unenclosed country at the back of Bournemouth, on the confines of Hampshire and Dorset, with the same soil, heath, and timber. Everything, however, is on a larger

scale, and the climate, of course, much warmer, the heat and dust making our *trajet* anything but agreeable. It was too provoking, that we did not see a single specimen of the shepherd on stilts, peculiar to this district, our only relief from the monotony of the scene being an occasional glimpse of some outlying point of the Pyrenees, which begin about midway to show their graceful forms, curving in purple folds gently down to the Atlantic.

Instead of going direct to Biarritz, we drove from the Bayonne station to the Hôtel de St. Martin, the very model of an old-fashioned French inn, standing in quiet and shady retirement within a spacious courtyard—its staircases, corridors, and apartments being all on a large airy scale, in pleasant contrast to the cramped dimensions of modern hotels, and imparting, in a southern climate, with the thermometer at 82 degrees indoors, such a delicious sense of coolness and repose.

I have seldom seen a town more to my mind than Bayonne, with its umbrageous trees along the principal thoroughfare, looking so cool and fresh that sultry afternoon; while the quaint old-world-like streets at the back, varied here and there by arcades not unlike those at Berne,

were quite a study. The left bank of the Adour, below the town, is planted with noble avenues, where you may enjoy shade, and the sea-breezes, as they come stealing up the river. Nor is the rest of the place devoid of attraction; the broad waters of the Nive and Adour, which here unite into one stream, being lined with handsome quays, and spanned by three bridges; and as we stood amid the motley-coloured crowd, which, in various costume, military, nautical, and provincial, was passing, with ceaseless flow, towards the suburbs, while the last rays of sunset were gleaming upon tower, housetop, and gable, we had before our eyes the elements of no ordinary picture.

A considerable portion of the population is Basque, this oldest of all European races (so say ethnologists) existing not only in Spain, where it extends over three provinces, but in a small district of France also, in the neighbourhood of Bayonne. Geography books describe the Basques as "a lively, industrious people, muscular and well-made, active in body, frank in manner, and passionate in character." As far as we had the opportunity of judging from two or three Basquaises, who waited on us at the hotel, they seem very good-natured and

obliging, having the countenance and complexion of the gipsy, with the pleasant manners of the Welsh peasantry.

Murray's "Handbook for France" informs its readers, that in these parts people used to ride *en cacolet*, though the practice has well nigh become obsolete. A wooden frame, containing seats for two, is placed pannier-fashion across the back of a horse, so that the weight of each rider is balanced by that of his co-equestrian. The chief difficulty of this mode of conveyance occurs at the beginning and end of a ride; for if either party mounts or dismounts one moment before the other, a capsize is the inevitable consequence; and as one of the pair—the conductor—is usually a stout countrywoman, the absurdity of such an incident may be conceived. Now-a-days, few, except peasants and market people, adopt this means of locomotion, though the day is not yet forgotten in the neighbourhood, when the Duchesse de Berri used to ride *en cacolet*.

Our destination being Biarritz, where this conveyance was most in vogue, we felt bound, as travellers of an inquiring turn of mind, to investigate so peculiar a department of "the manners and customs" of the Basques, and for

that purpose asked the waiting-women a number of questions pertinent to the subject. But the very sound of the words "*en cacolet*," so suggestive of cachinnation, seemed to excite their risible faculties to such a degree, and set them off into such fits of laughter, that we never succeeded in obtaining any coherent information, and were obliged to content ourselves with the sober-minded lucubrations of Murray.

Scarcely are the environs of Bayonne cleared, before you enter upon a desolate tract of barren heath and sand, extending most of the way to Biarritz, the monotony of the landscape being relieved, however, by the magnificent outline of the opposite coast of the Asturias, where the verdant slopes and craggy peaks of the Pyrenees rise abruptly out of the western waves. Nothing can exceed the boldness and freedom of the sea view, which stretches out into illimitable expanse over the broad bosom of the Atlantic. A few years ago those five miles between Bayonne and Biarritz must have been a walk of rare beauty, increasing in interest at every step, until at last the whole line of coast lies extended at your feet, with its lava-coloured rocks, running out to meet the huge waves, which, having traversed an entire ocean, surge

grandly in, to whiten with their foam the manifold caverns they have been scooping out along the shore ever since time began.

But now the swarms of smart carriages, and crowded omnibuses, which the sunshine of Imperial favour has called forth into a summer existence, give the neighbourhood quite a suburban character, and instead of gazing at the view, you begin to speculate whether that gaily-dressed crowd, disporting itself in all directions, has left in lodging-house and hotel any place for new comers to put their heads in.

Though night had not yet fallen, long lines of blazing light were streaming with exquisite effect across the sea from the windows of the Villa Eugénie, which stood out one mass of radiance as we drove into Biarritz, being illuminated from roof to base, in honour of the King of the Belgians, who dined that evening with the Emperor, and wearing, for the moment, the aspect of some fairy palace, instead of that commonplace, naked appearance, it exhibits in the daytime.

Rooms had been ordered several days before at the Hôtel de France, but on going to claim them, we found every corner crammed, and were transferred by the landlord to a new

