

BARING-GOULD SABINE

**A BOOK OF THE
PYRENEES**

Sabine Baring-Gould
A Book of the Pyrenees

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S. Baring-Gould

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PREFACE

This *Book of the Pyrenees* follows the same lines as my *Book of the Rhine* and *Book of the Riviera*. It is not a guide, but an introduction to the chain, giving to the reader a sketch of the History of the Country he visits.

CHAPTER I

THE PYRENEAN

The wall of division – A triple chain – Contrasts – Deforesting – The Catalan of Roussillon – The Basque of Navarre – Roman roads – The three ports – Central ridge – Trough to the north – Watershed – Glacial moraines – Lakes – Cirques – Abrupt termination of the lower valleys – Cave dwellers – Dolmens – That of Buzy – Landes of Pontacq – The Iberian stock – Development of language – Auxiliary verbs – The Basque villages and people.

The Pyrenees stand up as a natural wall of demarcation between two nations, the French and the Spaniards, just as the mountains of Dauphiné sever the French from the Italians. It has been remarked that these natural barriers are thrown up to part Romance-speaking peoples, whereas the mountain ranges sink to comparative insignificance between the French and the Germans. Over the Jura the French tongue has flowed up the Rhone to Sierre, above the Lake of Geneva, so the Spanish or Catalan has overleaped the Pyrenees in Roussillon, and the Basque tongue has those who speak it in both cis-Pyrenean and trans-Pyrenean Navarre. The Pyrenees are the upcurled lips of the huge limestone sea-bed, that at some vastly remote period was snapped from east to west, and through the fissure thus formed the granite was thrust, lifting along with it the sedimentary rocks.

Consequently the Pyrenees consist of from two to three parallel chains. The central and loftiest is that of granite, but where loftiest is hidden on the north side by the upturned reef of limestone. On the south the calcareous bed is lifted in great slabs, but split, and does not form so ragged and so lofty a range.

The Pyrenees start steeply out of the Mediterranean, which at a distance of five-and-twenty miles from Cape Creuse, has a depth of over 500 fathoms, and there the limestone flares white and bald in the line of the Albères. But to the west the chain does not drop abruptly into the Atlantic, but trails away for 300 miles, forming the Asturian mountains, and then, curving south, serves to part Galicia from Leon. The range of the Pyrenees dividing France from Spain is 350 miles in length.

The chain to the west wears a different aspect from that in the east. The Basque mountains are clothed with trees, pines and birch, walnut and chestnut, and above them are turf and heather. But the eastern extremity is white and barren. This is due to the fact that the Western Pyrenees catch and condense the vapours from the Atlantic, whereas the Oriental Pyrenees do not draw to them heavy and continuous rains. The boundary between the regions and climates is Mont Carlitte. In the Western Pyrenees the snow line lies far lower than in the east. On the former of these glaciers hang in wreaths, whereas there are none in the east.

The contrast between the northern and southern slopes is even more marked than that between the extremities of the chain. On the French side are snow, ice, running streams, fertile vales, luxuriant meadows and forests, and valleys and hillsides that sparkle with villages smiling in prosperity. But on the southern slope the eye ranges over barren rocks, sun-baked, scanty pastures, and here and there at long intervals occur squalid clusters of stone hovels, scarce fit to shelter goats, yet serving as human habitations.

To the mountaineers the French side is *bach*, that in shadow; the Spanish is *soulane*, the sunny. At one time this latter slope was not as arid and desert as at present, but the thriftlessness of man has shorn down the forests and the teeth of the goats have nipped off or barked every seedling or sapling thrown up by nature to cover its nakedness and redress the evil. Thereby the rainfall has been diminished, and the soil is exposed to be carried away into the plain by every storm that breaks over

the heights.¹ Trees are the patient workers that reconstitute the flesh over the bones of the mountains. They derive their elements from the air and the rock, and they perform transformations far more wonderful than those attributed to the philosopher's stone. As Victor Hugo sang: —

“Les arbres sont autant de mâchoires qui rongent
Les aliments épars dans l'air souple et vivant;
Ils dévorent la pluie, ils dévorent le vent.
Tout leur est bon: la nuit, la mort. La pourriture
Voit la rose, et lui va porter sa nourriture.”

When the trees disappear from a country it shows the thriftlessness of the inhabitants — “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”; with the axe and the firebrand they destroy in a day what it will take centuries to replace.

Two non-French races occupy the extremities of the chain and the lowlands at its feet. In the Basses Pyrénées are the Basques, in Pyrénées Orientales are the Catalonians, speaking a dialect of the Spanish of Barcelona.

The whole of Aquitaine, from the Loire to the Pyrenees, the whole of Western Spain and Portugal, was once occupied by the Iberians, of whom the Basques are the shrunken residue. All Eastern France and Eastern Spain were overflowed by the Celts. The Romans recognized that Spain was in the possession of two races totally distinct, ethnographically and linguistically, and they termed the population of the peninsula Celtiberians.

When the Romans arrived on the scene they carried one main causeway from Arles to Narbonne, and thence to Toulouse, and from Toulouse to Dax. From this, roads branched to the south and crossed the Pyrenees into Spain by three gaps, natural doorways — one to the east, the easiest of all, by Le Perthus, where Pompey set up a trophy; one by Somport leading from Iluro (Oloron) to Saragossa; a third by Roncevaux to Pampeluna.

By the first of these ports Hannibal crossed from Spain on his way to Italy; by it also poured the Saracens to devastate the fields of Gaul. By Roncevaux Charles the Great passed to menace the Saracen power, and on his return met there with disaster at the hands of the Basques, which has been immortalized in song.

East and west were debatable lands. Navarre sat astride on the ridge, with a foot in Spain and the other in Gascony. To the east was Roussillon, that pertained to the kings of Aragon, till ceded definitely to France in 1659.

But to revert to the geological structure of the Pyrenees. The central chain is, as already said, composed of crystalline rocks, granite, and micaceous schist, whereas the northern chain exhibits the upturned beds of superincumbent deposits, and on the Spanish side the limestone lies on the granite. In the department of Haute Garonne the chains are soldered together by a transverse bar of mountain.

J. H. Michon, author of *Le Maudit*, says well: —

“These mountains reveal to me almost the entire history of the successive periods in the terrestrial crust. I have but to follow the torrent of the Arbouste, and mount to the Lac de Seculéjo, and push farther to the Pic d'Espingo, to find myself on the crest of the ridge dividing France from Spain. Often at these altitudes, reaching to 3000 metres above the sea, the prodigious force which has rent the terrestrial crust in a fault of eighty leagues in breadth, which has upheaved, as in the Marboré, enormous masses of limestone that once formed the basin of seas succeeding each other at different epochs — often has this phenomenon filled me

¹ É. Reclus: *Géographie universelle*, II. “La France.”

with amazement. There in the Marboré lie the beds, retaining their horizontality, as though the aqueous deposits had been formed at this great elevation.

“But more commonly the central chain presents to our view masses of granite of astounding thickness. What a terrible cataclysm must that have been which thus reft and upset the globe, changing an extensive plain long submerged into a gigantic wall of granite shielded right and left with encasing masses of sedimentary formations which the upheaved granite has split and displaced in all directions.”

To the north of the Pyrenees lies a deep trough extending from the Bay of Biscay to the Corbières that links the Pyrenees to the Cevennes, and which at the present day forms the watershed between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. This gulf was gradually silted up by the torrents from the Pyrenees. Masses of rubble may be seen backing and capping isolated hills of sandstone, and forming long ridges, as that of the Park at Pau. The drift was from east to west. All the low hills are crowned with rolled stones. The boulders vary in size in proportion to the distance they have travelled. At Pamiers, Tarbes, and Pau they are of the size of a child's head, but farther north dwindle to pebbles and gravel, and finally we enter on a region of clay and sand, which heavy rains convert into quagmires. Indeed, those of Armagnac, between the Garonne and the Upper Adour, have hardly their equal in France. These are not glacier deposits, for the stones and pebbles have been rolled, and the clay or mud is the chewed or mumbled remains of boulders. At a later period the entire basin thus choked was lifted high above its original level.

That there was a glacial period in the south of France is certain, and the glaciers have left their moraines behind them. The glacier of Argelez extended in one stream to Lourdes, and then fanned out towards Tarbes. At Argelez it filled the valley to the height of 4430 feet. To moraine is due the desolate plain of detritus of Lannemezan. Separated from the mountain spurs by the profound depression in which flows the Neste, it is attached to the main chain solely by the isthmus that runs out from the Pic d'Arneille towards the plains.

The true watershed, between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, lies far to the east, on the frontier between Ariège and the Pyrénées Orientales. All the streams and rivers to the west of the insignificant chain there flow into the Bay of Biscay. The rivers to the east are comparatively unimportant, the Aude alone being of a respectable size; and this does not derive its waters from the main chain of the Pyrenees, its sources are in the spur that acts as the watershed.

The lakes of the Pyrenees are nothing more than mountain tarns; the largest is the Lac Lanoux, in Pyrénées Orientales, lying below an irregular cirque, commanded by the Pic Pédroux. It stands 6500 feet above the sea-level, and is about two and a half miles long. It is usually frozen over from September to the end of June.

But if the lakes be insignificant, the cirques are of the most imposing character. There are none in Europe comparable to that of Gavarnie. This consists of an immense cul-de-sac, a vast amphitheatre, the stages of limestone capped with snow and ice, and above it tower five huge snow-clad mountain crests. The arena is heaped up with rubble brought down by the cascades. The mighty walls are wept over by water from the thawing glaciers. The highest fall of all is that in the lap of the cirque; it is a stream that precipitates itself from a height of 1270 feet, and, speedily resolving itself into spray, waves in the air like an ostrich plume. Superb as is the Cirque de Gavarnie in summer its appearance in winter is even more sublime. Especially is it so when the mountain-tops are enveloped in vapour. Then the aspect is as of a series of walls with snow bars intervening, mounting as a giant staircase into heaven; and the cascades are transformed into crystal columns.

There are other cirques deserving of notice, as that of Estaubé, commanded by the Pic de Pinède, behind which rises the Mont Perdu, on Spanish ground.

Troumousse, to the east of Estaubé, is a basin of pasture, girded about by a rampart 3000 feet in height, above which soars the Munia, a mass of snow and ice.

From the French side long lush valleys run to the roots of the first chain between the buttresses, but above this the character of the scenery changes abruptly. The melted snows descending from peak and terrace have worn their way through the barrier imposed by the northern belt of limestone, feeling for and finding faults, through which they have torn their way, and debouch abruptly on to the lower broad valleys out of restricted ravines. Above these gorges we light on basins, such as that of Luz, green, in spring a sheet of gold from the crocuses. These were lake-beds, dried up when the torrents had contrived their escape. The rich vale of Ossau, between monotonous spurs, ends abruptly above Laruns, and there, through a cleft in the precipice, rages forth the Gave. It is much the same with the other Gave. Above Lourdes it glides through a broad, well-cultivated valley, but at Pierrefite, the mountain barrier is cleft in two places, through one of which roars forth the river from Luz, through the other the Gave from Cauterets. The Val de Campan, the Val d'Arreau, and that of Luchon, have much the same character.

Of the mountains, undoubtedly the Pic de Midi d'Ossau is the most conspicuous, not on account of its height, for it attains only to 8700 feet, but from its form, resembling a dog's tooth, cleft near the summit, glittering with snow, and rising in singular majesty above the Val d'Ossau, where the mountains fall back respectfully to allow a full view of its majesty. There are many noble mountains, – the Pic de Midi de Bigorre, 9436 feet; the Vignemale, 10,820 feet; Mont Perdu, 11,168 feet; Maladetta of the same height almost to a foot; but these last hold themselves screened behind the inferior but snow-clad northern range. The Canigou, however, belongs to this latter range, and is afflicted with none of the retiring qualities of the crystalline range. It steps boldly, ostentatiously forth above the plain of Roussillon, and for long was supposed to be the highest peak of the Pyrenees, though actually reaching only to 8360 feet. M. Élisée Reclus says of it: —

“Like Etna, the Canigou is one of those mountains which rise vigorous as masters over a wide stretch of country. From below this grey pyramid, cleft with ravines, streaked with detritus between salient ribs of rock, of every tint, is not a whit less striking in aspect than the Sicilian volcano.”

To the lover of flowers the Pyrenees present greater attractions than even the Alps. They lie farther to the south, enjoy more sun, and exhibit a greater luxuriance of vegetation and more variety in species. We meet in the Pyrenees with all old Alpine friends and make fresh acquaintances. Nowhere does the *Saxifraga longifolia* or *pyramidalis* throw up such a *jet-d'eau* of blossom. I have grown it at home, but it does not equal the beauty and abundance of flower as here wild. Nowhere are the geraniums in greater abundance and variety, springing up among the tufts of sharp-scented box. The crimson *Erodium manescavi*, the yellow *Hypericum mummularium*, the imbricated *Dianthus monspessulanus*, and the still more tattered *Dianthus superbus*, the purple toothwort, the blue stately aconite or monkshood, the lemon-coloured *Adonis vernalis*, the violet *Ramondia pyrenaica*, the *Primula viscosa* and *P. auricula*, the *Lilium bulbiferum*, the *Lilium pyrenaicum*, and a thousand more. Strange is it that the Alpen rose, the *Rhododendron ferrugineum*, should be as capricious a plant as it is. It luxuriates on the Alps, in the Pyrenees, and in the Dauphiné Alps; but does not appear in the Cevennes, the mountains of Auvergne, or Corsica. The great central plateau of France, though the heights rise to considerable altitudes and the constituent rocks are the same as those of the Pyrenees and the Alps, yet are totally devoid of this beautiful shrub.

The earliest inhabitants of the chain of the Pyrenees have left their traces in the limestone caverns. They were contemporary with the reindeer, the cave-bear, and hyena. Hardly a grotto that has been explored does not reveal that these men had lived there.

There are not many megalithic monuments to the north of the chain, but sufficient remain to show us that the dolmen-builder occupied the land from sea to sea. At Buzy, near the entrance to the Val d'Ossau, is a fine dolmen. I saw it first in 1850; it had been recently dug out by a treasure-seeker. A peasant told me that the man who had rifled it had found a bar of gold so soft that he could bend

it. In fact, it consisted of pure gold without alloy. Near the dolmen lay a slab of red sandstone, with circles carved on it, some concentric, much like the carvings on the stones of Gavr'innis, in Brittany, and in the great covered way at Drogheda, in Ireland. Not having a drawing book with me nor a scale, all I could do at the time was to sketch the sculpture on my cuff. Three weeks later I revisited Buzy to make a careful drawing to scale of the slab, and found that in the meantime it had been broken up by the road-menders.

The road from Pau to Tarbes traverses a vast plateau, rising 300 feet above the plain of the Adour. It is composed of marshy moorland covered with fern and gorse. This is actually the old moraine deposited by the glacier of Argelez. It is made up of angular blocks brought down from the mountains, excellent material from which to construct mortuary cells. And on this plateau we find tumuli in remarkable abundance. This, as well as Lannemezan, must have served as huge cemeteries. Of late these cairns have been excavated, and prove to cover dolmens and covered avenues; one, the Grande Butte of the lande of Pontacq, contains a megalithic chamber, recalling the finest monuments of the kind in Brittany.

The tumulus of La Hallade had been violated in the Iron Age, and used then as a place of interment; but underneath the cinerary urns of the Early Gaulish period was discovered the prehistoric monument intact – a long low gallery of stones set on edge and covered with flat slabs. It was subdivided into eight cells, and contained twenty-three vases, some of which contained burnt bones, flakes of schist and quartz, a handful of turquoise beads, and a little blade of gold.

That the people of the rude stone monuments have their modern representatives in the Basques is probable. All this region was held by the Vascones, who gave to it their name – Gascony. They were driven over the Pyrenees by the Gauls, but in the sixth century they forced their way back to their old dwelling places and the tombs of their fathers, and falling on Novempopulania, as the territory was then called, defeated the Duke Bladastus, in 581, and settled down on the plains. But they were beaten in their turn, and, abandoning the plains, settled in those districts known as Labourde, Soule, and Lower Navarre.

The Basques are a people of great interest to the ethnologist, as the last shrunken remains of that Iberian race that once occupied all Western Europe from Scotland to Portugal and Spain, and, indeed, overleaped the Straits and spread as Kabyles and Berbers in Northern Africa. Although overlapped by other races this Basque element forms the main constituent of the French race in the south-west.

Every cook knows what “stock” is. It is the basis on which almost every known kind of soup is built up, whether Julienne, soupe claire, à la marquise, à la vermicelle, and Mrs. Beeton only knows how many more. The Iberian has been the stock out of which the English, Irish, Welsh, French, Italians, and Spaniards have been concocted. In France there was a dash of Gaulish, a smack of the Roman, a soupçon of Frank, *et voilà*; the Frenchman of to-day is at bottom an Iberian.

This same Iberian was an accommodating personage. He was ready to abandon his own rudimentary tongue and adopt the language of his conquerors. He cast his agglutinative tongue behind his back, took in as much Latin as he could swallow, and produced the French language. In Wales he adopted the British tongue, in Ireland the Gaelic.

He was wise in so doing, for his own language, as represented by the Basque of the present day, is crude, unformed, and wanting in flexibility. The first stage in the formation of speech is in the utterance of nouns substantive. A child embraced by a stranger says, “Man kiss baby.” Kiss is a noun substantive. The child has not as yet arrived at the formation of a verb; and baby is a substantive, he has not yet attained to the use of a personal pronoun. The Chinese language remains in this primitive condition. In it the position of the words in a sentence governs the signification.

The second stage is that reached by the agglutinative tongues, where a differentiation of the parts of speech has taken place, and pronouns and particles acting as prepositions are tacked on to the nouns and verbs, but in such an elementary manner as never to become fused into them so as to affect and alter them. Always their separate existence is manifest. The third stage is where they

are united and interpenetrate each other. The soldering has been so close that only a skilled eye can discover that an inflexion in a verb, a case in a noun, are composite words.

Amo, amas, amat, are actually formed of the root *ama*, love, with primitive pronouns welded on to them so as to distinguish the person who loves.

In Basque the auxiliary verbs alone undergo conjugation, and they exhibit a peculiarity that deserves notice. Take an instance: the auxiliary verb *izan*, to be. "I am" may be rendered in four different ways, according to the person addressed. In speaking to a male familiarly "I am" is *nuk*; but a woman addressed in like manner is *nun*; "I am," when used in address to a person highly respected of either sex, is *nuzu*; "I am" spoken without any particular reference to any one is *niz*. So "he or she is" may be rendered *duk, dun, duzu, da*; and "we are" by *gaituk, gaitun, gaituzu, gare*.

The Basque language is capable of an incredible amount of agglomeration in the formation of words, and of indefinite modification of times, conditions, forms of words.

Etche is a house; *argizagi* is the moon; *elhur* is snow; *chori* is a bird; *sagar* an apple; *oski* a shoe; *aurhide* a child; *arrolze*, an egg.

We feel at once that we meet here with a language which has no relations that we can detect with any of the European tongues with which we are familiar.

The Basque has not distinguished himself in literature. It is true that a set of poems pretending to be ancient has been produced and published as relics of Early Basque poetry, but they were forgeries, like Macpherson's *Ossian*.

The nucleus of the Basque country may be said to be S. Jean-de-Luz. Formerly it was Ustaritz (i.e. the Oak of Judgment), where the Elders assembled in Council; but at the French Revolution this oak was cut down.

The Basque villages have a character of their own. Erected by a people who do not feel eagerness to look in at one another's windows, a people pushing independence to fanaticism, the villages consist rather of isolated buildings loosely united than of close agglomeration of houses. Like the Welsh, the Basques love whitewash, but paint their shutters brilliant red. The churches stand in the midst of a clump of trees, their towers surmounted by three points, symbolical of the Trinity. They are a healthy people, clean in mind and clean in body, religious and honest. The whole population has been described as "la plus belle, la plus saine, la plus alerte, la plus joyeuse qui se puisse se trouver en Europe."

CHAPTER II

GASCONY

The province of Gascony – Protest against inclusion in Aquitaine – Union of Béarn, Foix, and Bigorre – Navarre – Interest of Gascony to English people – Gascony annexed to the Crown of England – Viscounty of Béarn – The Fors – Independence of the people – A babe with open hands – An elderly wife – John of Béarn's treatment of a Pope – Charles of Viana – Schemes of Juana – Murder of Blanche – The coveted crown – Death of Francis Phœbus – Choice of a husband – Gascon braggarts.

The province of Gascony included Labourde, of which Bayonne was the capital; the viscounty of Soule, with Mauleon as its chief town; Basse Navarre; Béarn, a viscounty, with its residential châteaux at Orthez and at Pau, and its cathedrals at Lescar and Oloron; Bigorre, a county with its capital at Tarbes; Cominges, and to the south of that Couserans; and finally the county of Foix, on the frontier of Languedoc.

The whole of this stretch of land was included by Augustus in Aquitaine. This the peoples of Vasconia did not like, and they sent to him an embassy to request that they might be organized into a separate province. To this the emperor agreed. Concerning this transaction history is silent; but we know about it from a Roman inscription at Hasparren, set up by the ambassador, to commemorate his journey and the favourable reply he received.

In the thirteenth century the viscounty of Béarn was annexed to the county of Foix, and the intervening county of Bigorre fell to Foix in 1425, through the marriage of an heiress. Finally, Navarre also was united to Foix-Béarn-Bigorre in 1479. It furnished the holder with a royal title, nothing more save the scrap of land on this side the Pyrenees called Basse Navarre, of which the principal town was S. Jean-pied-du-port.

Gascony should be of special interest to us English, as it was for so long a possession of the English Crown.

Louis VII, before the death of his father, had contracted marriage with Eleanor of Guyenne, heiress of Poitou and of the duchy of Aquitaine. He obtained the most splendid dower that ever fell to the lot of a French king. It consisted of nothing less than half of the south of France. Eleanor was a passionate, frivolous girl; Louis, a pale, feeble prince, a prey to petty religious scruples. He took the cross and started on the disastrous and disgraceful crusade of 1147. He took Eleanor with him. She made no secret of her contempt for her husband. "He is a monk, and not a man." She became over-intimate with her uncle, Raymond of Antioch, the handsomest man of his time. She was accused also of carrying on an intrigue with a Saracen. On her return to Europe she insisted on being divorced from Louis, and she cast herself into the arms of Henry Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, Duke of Normandy, and heir to the crown of England. Thus she detached all these provinces from France and annexed them to the realm of England. Indeed, Henry, by the marriage of one of his sons to the heiress of Brittany, found himself master of nearly the whole of Western France. The House of Anjou had sprung into domination on Gaulish soil equal to that of the French king and his other vassals put together, and controlling the mouths of the three great rivers. Add to all this the possession of the English kingdom. The long protracted and desolating wars that ensued on French soil was a struggle between the kings as to whether France should be annexed to England, or Aquitaine to France.

"By the peace between Henry III and Louis IX," says Mr. Freeman, "Aquitaine became a land held by the King of England as a vassal of the French crown. From that time it became one main object of the French kings to change this feudal

superiority over this great duchy into an actual possession. The Hundred Years' War began through the attempt of Philip of Valois (1337) on the Aquitanian dominions of Edward III. Then the King of England found it politic to assume the title of King of France. But the real nature of the controversy was shown by the first great settlement. At the Peace of Bretigny (1360) Edward gave up all claim to the crown of France, in exchange for the independent sovereignty of his old fiefs and of some of his recent conquests. Aquitaine and Gascony, including Poitou ... were made over to the King of England without the reservation of any homage or superiority of any kind. These lands became a territory as foreign to the French kingdom as the territory of her German and Spanish neighbours. But in a few years the treaty was broken on the French side, and the actual possessions of England beyond the sea were cut down to Calais and Guines, with some small part of Aquitaine adjoining the cities of Bordeaux and Bayonne. Then the tide turned at the invasion of Henry V. Aquitaine and Normandy were won back; Paris saw the crowning of an English king, and only the central part of the country obeyed the heir of the Parisian kingdom. But the final result of the war was the driving out of the English from all Aquitaine and France except the single district of Calais.

“The French conquest of Aquitaine (1451–3), the result of the Hundred Years' War, was in form the conquest of a land which had ceased to stand in any relation to the French crown.”

Thus Aquitaine, including Gascony, had belonged to the crown of England from 1152 to 1453, just three hundred and one years.

But, although nominally pertaining to England, it contained stubborn and recalcitrant elements, notably the counts of Foix, who were viscounts of Béarn.

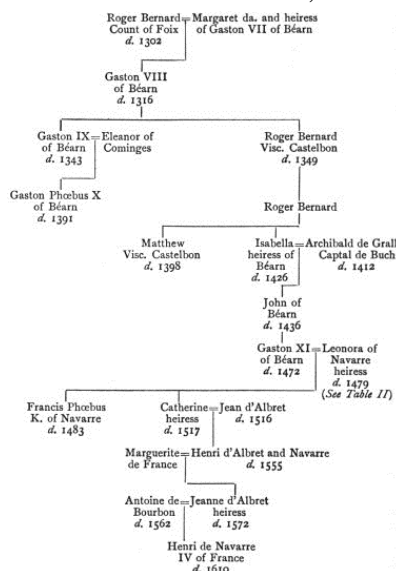
Towards the close of the eleventh century the viscounty of Béarn had enjoyed sovereign rights, admitting allegiance to none. Later, when Louis XI went in pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Sarrance, he lowered the sword of France on entering Béarn, as being no longer in his own kingdom. This little territory during the Middle Ages was perhaps the best governed corner of the earth, the freest and happiest in France, and perhaps in all Europe. The *fors* of Béarn were the liberties to which the viscount was required to swear adhesion before he was recognized as sovereign. The earliest of these *fors* is that of Oloron (1080), renewed in 1290, and it is one of the earliest monuments extant of the Romance tongue. By these constitutions the inhabitants of the viscounty governed themselves.

An instance or two of the independent spirit of the Béarnais may be given.

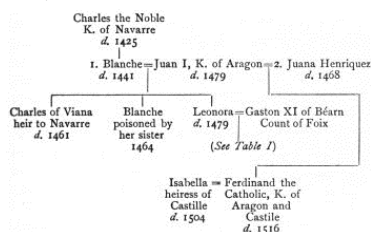
Marie, daughter of Peter, Viscount of Béarn, upon the death of her brother, in 1134, became heiress. She had been reared at the Court of Aragon, and had married William de Moncada, a Catalonian noble. She had the weakness to do homage to the king for Béarn. The people rose in revolt, deposed her, and elected as their viscount a knight of Bigorre, well spoken of for his virtues. He, however, disregarded the *fors*, and attempted to rule as a feudal lord, whereupon within a year he was assassinated. Then a knight of Auvergne was chosen, and held the viscounty for two years. But he also disregarded the constitution and was put to death. Then his estates of Béarn sent a deputation to Marie de Moncada, to inform her that it had come to their ears that she had given birth to twin boys, and the people authorized their commissioners to select one of the twins to be their viscount. The deputation were shown the cradle in which the infants lay; one slept with his hands open, the other held his fists clenched. “We will have the open-handed lad,” said the Béarnais, and he became Viscount Gaston VI. On his death in 1170 his brother, the close-fisted William Raymond, claimed the inheritance, but the Béarnais refused to acknowledge his claim as one of right, protesting that the viscountship was elective. They compelled him to submit to their will, and accepted him only when he had granted still greater liberties than they had hitherto enjoyed, and this not till five years after the death of his brother.

William Raymond died in 1223, leaving a son, William, to succeed him, but he was killed in battle against the Moors in 1229, and William's son Gaston succeeded under the regency of his mother Garsende. She is described as having been so stout that only a large wagon could contain her, and then she overlapped the sides. Gaston VII, son of this plump lady, left an only child, a daughter Margaret, the heiress of Béarn, which she carried with her when married to Roger Bernard, Count of Foix. Thus it came about that Foix and Béarn were united in one hand.

I. PEDIGREE OF THE VISCOUNTS OF BÉARN, COUNTS OF FOIX



II. PEDIGREE OF LEONORA, HEIRESS OF NAVARRE



Roger Bernard and Margaret had a grandson, Gaston IX of Béarn. At the age of eighteen he was married to Eleanor of Cominges, a lady considerably older than himself. Some one without tact remarked to the Countess on the disparity of their ages. "Disparity of ages!" exclaimed she, "Why, I would have waited for him till he was born."

The young husband fell fighting against the Moors in 1343. By his elderly wife he left a son, Gaston Phœbus, of whom more when we come to Orthez.

Gaston Phœbus was succeeded by a cousin, Matthew de Castelbon, who died in 1398, without issue, and he was followed by his sister Isabella, married to Archibald, Captal de Buch, a just and worthy ruler. They had a son, John of Béarn, who succeeded his mother in 1426. He captured the antipope, Benedict XIII, and threw him into a dungeon in one of his castles, where he died of ill-treatment, and then John denied Christian burial to his body. This so delighted Pope Martin, the rival of Benedict, that he conferred on John the title of "Avenger of the Faith." Jean was succeeded by his son Gaston, who placed his sword at the disposal of Charles VI. At Bordeaux with his aid the English underwent a signal defeat. He was married to Eleanor of Navarre, through whom the claim to the title of King of Navarre came to her descendants. How that was, and the crimes that brought it about, must now be told.

Charles the Noble, King of Navarre, died in 1425. Having lost his only son, he bequeathed crown and kingdom to his daughter Blanche, married to Juan of Aragon, brother of Alphonso, King of Aragon and the Two Sicilies, and by reversion after her death to their son Charles, Prince of Viana. Juan of Aragon acted as viceroy to his brother whilst Alphonso was in Italy. On the death of Charles the Noble Juan and Blanche assumed the titles of King and Queen of Navarre. Blanche died in 1441, and by her will bequeathed the kingdom, in accordance with her father's desire, to her son Charles of Viana. But Juan had no thought of surrendering the crown to his son. He married a young, handsome, and ambitious woman, Juana Henriquez, daughter of the Admiral of Castille, and she became the mother of Ferdinand, afterwards known as "the Catholic." Thenceforth she schemed to obtain all that could be grasped for her own son Ferdinand.

Charles was an amiable, accomplished youth, fond of literature and of the arts. Queen Blanche, in her will, had urged him not to assume the government without the consent of his father; but when, in 1452, the estates of Aragon recognized him as heir to the crown, and Juan declined to resign, Charles openly raised the standard of revolt. Juan marched against his son, and Charles was defeated, taken prisoner, and consigned to a fortress. There he remained for a year, and would have remained on indefinitely had not the Navarrese armed for his deliverance. Juan was forced to yield, and as a compromise confirmed Charles in the principality of Viana, and promised to abandon to him half the royal revenues.

The reconciliation thus forcibly effected was not likely to last; in fact, the compromise suited neither party. The father burned to chastise sharply his rebellious son, and Charles chafed at being defrauded of the crown which was his undoubted heritage. Hence in 1455 both prepared to renew the contest. The following year, 1456, the prince was again defeated by his father, and was compelled to fly to his uncle Alphonso, who was then at Naples. During his absence Juan summoned the estates and declared that both Charles and his eldest daughter Blanche were excluded from succession to the throne – Charles on account of his rebellion, Blanche for having espoused his cause – and Juan proclaimed his youngest daughter Leonora to be his heir. Blanche had been married to, and then separated from, Henry the Impotent, King of Castille. Leonora was married to the Count of Foix.

The inhabitants of Pampeluna, and the people generally throughout Navarre, were indignant at the injustice committed by Juan; they elected Charles to be their king, and invited him to ascend the throne. Unfortunately for him, Alphonso, King of Aragon and the Two Sicilies, died in 1458, whereupon Juan ascended the throne that had been occupied by his brother. Charles now hoped for a reconciliation, which he had reason to expect, as his father now wore three crowns which had come to him by right; and he hoped that Juan would readily surrender to him that of Navarre, which he had usurped, and to which he had no legitimate claim. The Prince of Viana landed in Spain in 1459, and dispatched a messenger to Juan entreating him to forget the past and to recognize his claim to Navarre at present and his right to succession to Aragon. But Juan would allow nothing further than restoration to the principality of Viana, and expressly forbade his son setting foot in Navarre. Had the misunderstanding ended here, it had been well for Charles; but a new occasion of dispute arose.

Henry IV of Castille offered his sister Isabella, heiress to the crown after his death, to Charles of Viana. This alarmed and enraged Juana, the stepmother of Charles, who calculated on effecting this alliance for her own son Ferdinand, and uniting under his sceptre the kingdoms of Aragon and Castille. To obtain this end Charles must be got rid of. Accordingly she induced his father Juan to invite him to a conference at Lerida. The prince went thither unsuspectingly, and was at once arrested and thrown into prison. The Estates of Aragon and Catalonia were incensed at the harsh and unjust treatment of one whom they hoped eventually to proclaim as their sovereign. They demanded his liberation. The King refused. Insurrection broke out, became general, and so menacing that Queen Juana was alarmed and herself solicited the release of the Prince. She did more; she went in person to Morella, whither the captive had been transferred, to open the prison gates. He was conducted by her to Barcelona, which admitted him, but shut its gates in her face. All Catalonia now recognized

the Prince, and proclaimed him heir to the thrones of Aragon, Navarre, and Sicily. But the rejoicing of the people was of brief duration, as shortly after his release from durance Charles fell ill, lingered a few days, and died. By his testament he bequeathed the crown of Navarre to his sister Blanche as next in order of succession to himself.

The death of Charles was too opportune for it not to have been attributed to poison, administered by an agent of his stepmother. Soon after a ray of sunlight focussed by a mirror set fire to Juana's hair. This was at once set down as a Judgment of Heaven falling on her, an indication by the finger of God that she was the murderess of her stepson.

Charles was now out of the way; Blanche, however, obstructed the path, and the will of her brother in her favour proved fatal to her. Juan was resolved to retain the sovereignty of Navarre during his own life, and none the less to transmit it at death to his favourite daughter Leonora, Countess of Foix, or her issue. He determined to compel Blanche to renounce her rights. To effect this she was sent across the Pyrenees, closely guarded, under the pretext that she was about to be given in marriage to the Duke of Berri, brother of the French king. But she perceived clearly enough what was her father's purpose, and at Roncevaux, on her way, she caused a protest to be prepared in all secrecy, in which she declared that she was being carried out of Spain by violence, against her will, and that force would be used to compel her to renounce her rights over Navarre; and now she declared beforehand against the validity of such a renunciation. Upon reaching S. Jean-Pied-du-port, she was, as she had anticipated, constrained to make a formal surrender of all her rights, in favour of her sister and brother-in-law, Gaston, Count of Foix. In a letter addressed to Henry, couched in pathetic terms, she reminded him of the dawn of happiness that she had enjoyed when united to him years before, of his promises made to her, and of her subsequent sorrows. As she was well aware that her father was consigning her to imprisonment, and perhaps death at the hands of her ambitious and unscrupulous sister, she conferred on him all her rights to the crown of Navarre, to the exclusion of those who meditated her assassination, the Count and Countess of Foix. On the same day that this letter was dispatched she was handed over to an emissary of the Countess Leonora, 30 April, 1462, and was conveyed to the Castle of Orthez. The gates closed on her, and she was seen no more, but not long after they opened to allow a coffin to issue to be conveyed to Lescar, there to be interred.

The secret of Blanche's death was closely kept, till the Navarrese Cortes took the matter up, and demanded her release as their rightful queen. Then only was it announced that she was dead, but on what day and in what manner she died was never revealed.

The Count and Countess of Foix now congratulated themselves on having secured the crown of Navarre to themselves and to their descendants, and their son Gaston was at once invested with the title of Prince of Viana. But the crime committed brought but a barren gain. A few years later Gaston of Viana, their hope, was killed by a lance in a tournament at Lillebourne. Count Gaston never obtained the kingdom, and died at Roncevaux in 1472. His widow, Leonora, was balked to the very last. Her father retained the title of King and the rule over Navarre up to his death in 1479, and when the coveted diadem fell to her, she retained it but for fifteen days, and then died also. Her grandson, Francis, called Phœbus on account of his beauty, was indeed crowned at Pampeluna. He was a gallant and amiable boy, but the doom of the ill-gotten crown was on him. Ferdinand the Catholic, son of the wicked Joanna, would not allow a pretty boy to stand in his way. One day, 29 January, 1483, after dinner, the prince, *adonné à toutes gentilleses*, took a flute on which he was wont to play. Scarcely had he raised it to his lips ere he turned deadly white and sank into a chair. In two hours he was dead, at the age of sixteen. As he lay dying he turned to his mother with a smile and said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

It was the conviction of all contemporaries that Ferdinand the Catholic had contrived to have the lad poisoned.

The claim to the crown of Navarre now passed to Catherine, the sister of Francis Phœbus, married to Jean d'Albret. This marriage is interesting. It was determined by the Estates of Béarn. No

sooner was Francis Phœbus dead than Ferdinand of Castille, his supposed murderer, sent to demand the hand of Catherine for his son, a child in the cradle. But the mother, Magdalen of France, coldly replied that the choice of a husband for her daughter was a matter for decision by the Assembly of the delegates of Béarn. The Estates were convoked to Pau, and the majority voted for Jean d'Albret, whose lands adjoined Béarn, and who was himself then but a child. During the infancy of Catherine and Jean d'Albret Magdalen acted as regent. The Count of Grammont and others formed a plot to poison her in favour of Jean de Foix, Catherine's uncle. It was discovered, and the minor conspirators were executed at Pau; the instigators, being *grandeess*, escaped scot-free.

Catherine, on growing to woman's estate, left no stone unturned in her attempt to obtain the kingdom of Navarre, but feebly supported by her amiable husband. "Would that I had been born John and you Catherine!" exclaimed the impetuous princess; "and then we would have secured Navarre." In the end Catherine died of disappointment at the failure of all her schemes, and in dying turned her eyes in the direction of Navarre.

The rest of the story of the viscounts of Béarn, counts of Foix, and titular kings of Navarre, shall be told when we come to Pau.

By some fatality, surely unjustly, the Gascons are credited throughout France with being braggarts, cowards, the makers of bad bulls and as bad jokes. This is what a writer says of them in *Le Passe-temps Agréable*, Rotterdam, 1737: —

"If in France you would speak of a braggart and swash-buckler, whose magnanimity and courage are discoverable in his speech, and in his speech alone; who speaks of war, without having been in it; say but, He is a Gascon, and this explains everything. Those friends at the table who are faithful so long as it is spread with good cheer, but who vanish when the platter and the beaker are empty — say that they are Gascons, and that explains all. Should you encounter a fellow who boasts of his gallantries and the favours he has received from fair ladies, intimate that he is a Gascon, and all will know the worth of his statements. The word Gascon suffices to comprehend various characters never estimable. But it must not be supposed that all Gascons are such sorry creatures as those spoken of above. There are to be found among them men of rare merit, and men with plenty of courage, men as honest as are any others. But, actually, all Gascons do not come from Gascony. Every nation under the sun breeds its braggarts and false braves. 'The true Gascons,' says a writer who knew them well in their own land washed by the Garonne, 'the true Gascons possess a good deal of heart, and are desirous of making all the world aware of the fact.' But I am not satisfied that they do not make display of more heart than they actually possess."

A collection of *bons-mots* and blunders made by Gascons is found in *Vasconia*, Lyons, 1730. The description of a Gascon, as given by a fellow-countryman, is more flattering than that above. He says: "To be a Gascon is to be a happy mixture of dazzling virtues and of agreeable and convenient faults. Everything in us is charming, even our imperfections. What if there be blemishes perceptible in us? There are spots in the sun itself."

CHAPTER III

BAYONNE

Approach to the Pyrenees – Colour of the mountains – Bayonne – Cathedral – Attachment of Bayonne to the English – Quarrels with Norman towns – Taken by the French – Bayonets – Meeting of queens – Wild Scotchmen – Napoleon lures the Infante and King of Spain to Bayonne – Dethrones the King – The crossing of the Pyrenees by Wellington – Battles – About Bayonne – Cemetery – Lakes in the Landes – Biarritz – The Refuge – S. Jean de Luz – Riding *en cacolet* – Heaving at Eastertide – The Bidassoa – Peace of the Pyrenees – Fontarabia – Passages – San Sebastian – Siege – Charges brought against the English.

Michelet, with florid eloquence, describes the approach to the Pyrenees from Bordeaux in the first chapter of the second volume of his *History of France*.

“However beautiful and fertile may be the valley of the Garonne, one cannot lag there. The distant summits of the Pyrenees exercise on us a too powerful attraction. But it is a serious matter to reach them. Whether you take the way by Nérac, a doleful *seigneurie* of the Albrets, or whether you follow the coast, it is all the same, you must either traverse or skirt an ocean of *landes*, covered with cork trees and vast pine forests, where nothing is met save black sheep under the conduct of a shepherd of the department, that have left the mountains for the plains in quest of warmth. The roving life of these shepherds is one of the most picturesque elements in the South. These nomads, companions of the stars in their eternal solitude, half astronomers, half sorcerers, carry their goods with them. Here in the West they continue to lead the Asiatic life of Lot and Abraham.

“The formidable barrier of Spain now rises before us in all its majesty. The Pyrenees are not, like the Alps, a complicated system of peaks and valleys, they are simply a mighty wall that drops to lower elevations at its extremities. Two peoples, distinct from one another – the Basques at the west, the Catalans at the east – hold the doors of two worlds. These irritable and capricious porters open and shut at will, wearied and impatient at the incessant passage of the nations through these ports. They opened to Abderaman, they shut to Roland. Many graves lie between Roncevaux and the Seu d’Urgel.”

Certain it is that the approach to the Pyrenees across the long level of the Landes lends to them an advantage only possessed by the Alps when seen from the plains of Lombardy. I know nothing so impressive as the scene from a swell on the surface of the Landes, when the eye sees the great range in silver and cobalt stretching to the south from a dim east, in which snowy peaks and silver clouds are indistinguishable, to die away beyond the reach of the eye in the west, and all beheld over a vast sheet of dark green forest, like a sea stretching to their roots. Nowadays we whirl from Bordeaux to Dax and Bayonne by rail. I recall the journey by carriage, when before our eyes for two days we saw that blue ridge tipped with silver half-way up the sky, hour after hour becoming more distinct. I have spoken of the colours of the mountains as cobalt and silver. So they are in the remote distance, but when near at hand the tints are richer. I had a drawing-master at Bayonne, to whom I showed some water-colour sketches of English scenery. He shook his head. “Cobalt!” said he; “that will not do for the shadows of our Pyrenees. For them you must employ ultramarine and carmine.” He spoke the truth. Such are the royal purples of Pyrenean shadows worn in summer and autumn.

Bayonne is a trefoil. There are three towns, but the third is on the north side of the Adour, and in the department of Landes. It has grown up about the railway station and the citadel. Old Bayonne is a city planted on both banks of the Nive, where it joins the Adour. Bayonne is the capital of the Basque country, and the population of the town is composed of Basques, Spaniards, Jews, with a sprinkling only of French. The cathedral, the old castle, the Mairie, and the theatre are in Grand Bayonne on the left bank of the Nive. In Petit Bayonne, on the right bank, are the arsenal, the Châteaux Neuf, and the military hospital.

The old town, cramped within its fortifications, capable of expansion upwards only, has narrow and gloomy streets.

The cathedral was left incomplete by the English when driven out of Bayonne. It lacked a west front and towers; but these have been supplied of late years. Externally the cathedral is not striking, but within it is well-proportioned. Choir and apse pertain to the thirteenth century, the nave to the fourteenth, all constructed when the English were masters of the town. The arms of England, of Talbot, and other noble families that are English, are emblazoned on the keys of the vaulting ribs. On the south side of the church are the beautiful cloisters, almost the largest in France. Their date is 1240.

A good many houses in the town have cellars vaulted with ribs to a key, and on some of these latter are English arms. But few old buildings in the town are of interest. The château dates from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the new château is of the fifteenth and sixteenth, but neither is architecturally remarkable.

Bayonne and Bordeaux were warmly attached to England during the three hundred years that they pertained to the English crown. Their love was not altogether sentimental; it sprang out of self-interest, as these two ports furnished the wine that was supplied to Britain and Ireland. Our kings did what they could to attach the citizens to their crown by the grant of extensive privileges, and undoubtedly Bayonne reached its greatest prosperity when under the sceptre of England. This prosperity roused the jealousy of the commercial ports of Normandy, especially was this the case when that duchy was detached from the English crown. To avenge the death of a Rouen merchant killed in an affray in Bayonne the Normands attacked and butchered a whole ship's crew that had entered one of their ports. On another occasion they surprised sixty-two Bayonnais merchant vessels in the port of S. Malo, and hung from the yardarm one of the crew of each side by side with dogs. This latter insult was more keenly felt by the Bayonnais than the execution itself. They appealed to Edward I "against these bad persons who have put your subjects to death, hanging mastiffs alongside of Christians, in defiance of Christianity and of your Majesty, and of your subjects."

The outrage had to be chastised. Large armaments were equipped on both sides, and in one engagement the Normands lost five thousand men. The grim joke with the dogs proved costly to them in the end.

But at the close of the thirteenth century these petty quarrels between rival cities were merged in the general war that raged between England and France. Philip the Fair got possession of Bayonne in 1294. Edward I hastened into Gascony, besieged the town, retook it, and thenceforth the leopards of England waved from their battlements till July, 1451, when the English were expelled from Bayonne by Charles VII. The Bayonnais watched the entry of the French with sullen dissatisfaction, and were only consoled for the change of master by a miracle. A luminous white cross appeared in the sky, and this led them to suppose that Heaven had decreed that the white cross of France should take the place of the red cross of England. Bayonne has given its name to the bayonet, which was invented there about the year 1647. Originally it was a dagger with a round handle that fitted into the bore of a gun, and was fixed only after the soldier had discharged his piece. The use of the bayonet fastened on to the barrel was an improvement introduced by the French. In the battle of Marsaglia in 1693 the success of the French was mainly due to the employment of this weapon. The enemy were unable to stand against so formidable a novelty.

In 1565 the queen-mother, Catherine de Medici, here met her daughter, Isabella of Spain, who had just recovered from a severe illness.

“Political motives were not forgotten, and among other matters to be considered between the sovereigns of France and Spain – for Catherine hoped that Philip would accompany his wife – was undoubtedly the repression of heresy. There exists among the state papers at Simancas what is called by diplomatists an ‘identical note’ of the subjects to be discussed at Bayonne. In it we read that the two powers engaged not to tolerate the Reformed worship in their respective states, that the canons of the Council of Trent should be enforced, that all nonconformists should be incapacitated for any public office, civil or military, and that heretics should quit the realm within a month, permission being accorded them to sell their property. Although Catherine gave her assent to these declarations, so far as the discussion of them was concerned, we have indisputable evidence that she did not intend to adopt them in the same sense as Philip of Spain.”²

It has been supposed that on this occasion the massacre of S. Bartholomew was planned. Such, however, was not the case. Catherine at the time was indisposed to adopt violent measures. She sought to hold the balance between the contending parties. Moreover, the massacre did not take place till seven years later. The meeting at Bayonne in 1565 was rather one of rejoicing, with a series of magnificent fêtes, and political business was transacted only at odd moments. Some years later, when Walsingham referred to this Bayonne meeting as the occasion of an inauguration of a general league against the Protestants, Catherine replied that it had no such result at all, and that it “tended to no other end but to make good cheer.”

One of the masques performed on this occasion was a representation of “Wild Scotchmen.” The Duke of Guise and six others were equipped in what was fondly believed to be the Highland costume. Over a white satin shirt embroidered with gold lace and crimson silk they wore a jacket of yellow velvet, with short skirts closely plaited “according to the custom of these savages,” trimmed with a border of crimson satin, ornamented with gold, silver, pearls, and other jewels of various colours. Their yellow satin hose were similarly adorned, and their silk boots were trimmed with silver fringe and rosettes.

“On their heads they wore a cap *à l’antique* of cloth of gold, and for crest a thunderbolt pouring out a fragrant jet of perfumed fire – the said thunderbolt being twined round by a serpent reposing on a pillow of green satin. Each cavalier wore on his arm a Scotch shield or targe covered with cloth of gold and bearing a device. The horses’ trappings were of crimson satin with plumes of yellow, white, and carnation. So much for the Frenchman’s ideal of a Scotchman!” – White.

We must pass on to the time of the First Empire, before Bayonne became the scene of any political event of importance.

Napoleon had resolved on dethroning the King of Spain, and on converting the peninsula into a kingdom for his brother Joseph. The condition of affairs in Spain was favourable. The King, Charles IV, was the feeblest of the fainéant race of the Bourbons. He retained a tame confessor about his person, for whom he would whistle when he was conscious of a twinge of conscience. The Queen, Louisa Maria of Parma, had made a paramour of Manuel Godoy, a lusty private in the Guards. Him she created Prince of the Peace and Prime Minister. His power over her and over the mind of the poor King was complete.

The Infante, the Prince Ferdinand, was also feeble-minded. He was the rallying point of the faction opposed to Godoy. Ferdinand appealed by letter to Napoleon (11 October, 1807), and the

² White (H.), *The Massacre of S. Bartholomew*. London, 1868.

Emperor at once, through his agent Savary at Madrid, pressed him to throw himself on his protection by coming to Bayonne, "where," said Savary, "you will hear him salute you as Ferdinand VII, King of Spain and the Indies." The stupid Bourbon prince walked into the trap. On 16 April, 1808, he crossed the frontier. "Ha! is the fool actually come!" exclaimed Napoleon, who was at Bayonne. "I could hardly have thought it possible."

Napoleon received him graciously, but instead of hailing him as king, endeavoured to induce him voluntarily to resign his pretensions to the throne. But Ferdinand, though stupid, was stubborn, and he refused. It was accordingly necessary for the Emperor to ensnare the old king as well. He wrote to him and to the Queen, inviting them to Bayonne so that he might settle the dispute between him and the Infante, in order to place the throne of Charles beyond danger of usurpation by Ferdinand. The King was also dull enough to walk into the snare.

On 30 April a huge, lumbering coach drawn by eight Biscayan mules rolled over the drawbridge of Bayonne. It contained the monarch, his queen, his youngest son, and some attendants. Two other antiquated chariots discharged their cargoes of chamberlains and ladies-in-waiting. Godoy, who had preceded the royal party, welcomed it, and assured his sovereign that the intentions of the Emperor towards him were most generous. This assurance was speedily corroborated by Napoleon, who appeared in person. The childish king threw himself, weeping, into the arms of Napoleon, and called him his best friend and truest support.

As the infirm old man was unable to walk unassisted, Napoleon took him under the arm to help him up the steps. Charles turned to the Queen and said, "See, Louisa, he is sustaining me!"

The resentment of the old couple against their son had increased. Ferdinand was summoned to their presence before Napoleon, and then ensued a scene to which the Emperor afterwards looked back with disgust. The King loaded his son with bitter reproaches, the Queen broke out into invectives. Losing all command over herself, this royal virago foamed at the mouth, called on her good friend the Emperor to send him to the guillotine, and had the indecency to protest that this son, though borne by her, had not the King for his father. Then the old king, crippled with rheumatism, raised his shaking hand over the prince and threatened him with his cane.

The main quarrel between the King and Ferdinand was due to Charles having abdicated when a riot broke out in Madrid and Ferdinand having been proclaimed. But Charles afterwards revoked his abdication, which had been wrung from him by his terrors, and Ferdinand refused to withdraw his claim to having succeeded his father on the surrender of the crown by the old man. After the deplorable scene described, Ferdinand gave way so far as to consent to resign the crown, on condition that this renunciation was in favour of his father only, and that it was ratified in Madrid. This did not satisfy Napoleon; it was not what he wanted.

At this juncture Marbot, the aide-de-camp of Murat, who had been sent to Madrid, arrived at full gallop to announce to the Emperor that an insurrection had broken out in the capital, in consequence of an attempt made to remove the remaining members of the royal family.

This furnished Napoleon with the excuse he wanted. "Unless," said he to Ferdinand, whom he accused of having provoked the riot, "unless between this and midnight you have recognized your father as king, and have sent information to this effect to Madrid, I will have you dealt with as a rebel."

The terrified prince yielded. On 6 May Ferdinand signed a formal renunciation of the crown. But on the previous day Charles had been induced also to surrender his claims. Ferdinand in return was to have the palace of Navarre and an income of six hundred thousand francs; Charles was accorded the châteaux of Chambord and Compiègne. The despised and disinherited princes were to receive in all ten millions; "but," as Napoleon wrote, "we will reimburse ourselves out of Spain!" Yet even this undertaking was not observed. Ferdinand was interned in France.

The stretch of country from Bayonne to the frontier is full of interest to the Englishman as the scene of the contest between Wellington and Soult, after the former had driven the French over the frontier and out of Spain.

The autumn of 1813 had been passed by the greater part of the allied army of English, Portuguese, and Spaniards under canvas on the cold and cloudy summits of the Western Pyrenees. They endured great privations. Their picket and night duties were incessant and harassing; the weather, moreover, was stormy. The tedium of these camps, and the sufferings from frost and sleet, exhausted the patience and shook the constancy of the soldiers of weakest fibre.

But the fall of Pampeluna released the army on the Pyrenees from its inactivity. It was known that Marshal Soult had prepared a defensive position on the Nivelle stretching from ten to twelve miles from the sea at S. Jean de Luz to the Petite Rhune before the village of Sare.

Soon after midnight, on the morning of 10 November, the columns of the allies under Wellington wound down the passes of the mountains in silence, lighted by the moon. At earliest dawn the attack was made on the lines of the enemy, and by sunset, in a succession of brilliant charges, the allies had broken the line. Soult had been out-maneuvred and out-fought on his own long-prepared ground, and beaten at every point. The French, numbering seventy thousand men, had been placed in carefully selected positions. Strongly entrenched, they knew the roads, and were fighting to protect their native land from invasion; yet they suffered themselves to be dislodged from every point assailed with a lack of spirit that surprised the allies.

Under cover of night Soult withdrew and concentrated his forces in front of Bayonne. Wellington took up a position within two miles of the enemy, his left resting on the sea and his right on Cambo. As the weather was stormy and wet, all operations ceased. The roads were execrable, the crossroads a quagmire. It was not possible at that time of the year to move artillery over the sodden ground, and even communication between the wings was difficult.

Sir Rowland Hill on the right crossed the Nive at Cambo, and the French in front of him fell back on Bayonne; he then occupied the heights of Villefranche. The forces of the allies were disposed in a semicircle, their communications intersected by a river, and made difficult by the muddy roads. The position of the French was central, with short and easy communications, and was supported by the guns of the fortress. Soult could fling himself with all his weight on any point where the allies were weakest in his estimation, and that before they could bring up reinforcements. This, in fact, is what he did. On 10, 11, and 12 December, the Marshal directed repeated attacks on Sir John Hope on the left; but met with no success. Then hastily passing through the town with his main force, on the night of the 12th, he hurled thirty thousand men against the position held by Sir Rowland Hill on the British right. Sir Rowland mustered but thirteen thousand men, British and Portuguese. The French columns advanced steadily, disregarding the crushing bullets of a well-served artillery, the grape and the musketry of the light troops. They were gaining ground by sheer weight of numbers, when the reserve advanced, arriving from the centre, and the French were beaten back with terrible slaughter, all Bayonne looking on from the ramparts.

The battle was fought by Sir Rowland Hill with his own corps, unassisted. Wellington did not arrive on the field until the victory was won.

Soult now strongly garrisoned Bayonne, and withdrew along the road to Orthez and Pau, in order to defend the latter. Wellington followed him, but not until the close of January, and he left Sir John Hope to watch Bayonne. It was necessary for this gallant officer to cross the Adour, as the citadel was on the right bank. The river was three hundred yards wide at the point selected, one where a bend in its course concealed it from the view of the garrison of Bayonne.

“At one in the morning of 23 January Sir John Hope marched from his cantonments to direct and support this movement. The pontoons were unavoidably delayed by the depth and softness of the sandy road, therefore the design of sending a detachment across the river before daylight was defeated. However, the attention of the garrison was entirely occupied by the lively demonstrations upon their entrenched camp. Sir John Hope determined to commence passing the river as soon as ever a few boats and pontoons could be launched. Owing to light and baffling

winds the bridge flotilla had not arrived off the bar. The pontoons from Bidart did not accomplish their march in the time expected, and at noon four jolly-boats and five pontoons, which the men took on their shoulders and carried over the sand-hills, were the only means of passage at the disposal of the general. To protect the launch of these boats some field guns were moved forward. At sight of the troops the enemy's picket retired without firing a shot, and walked leisurely to the citadel. Fifty men were instantly rowed over to the right bank. A hawser was stretched across the river, the five pontoons were formed into rafts, and a detachment of the Guards was ferried over. When about 600 men had been put across, the tide flowed so strong that the rafts could no longer work; and, save a few sent over in the jolly-boats, the passage of troops ceased. At this time only six companies of the Guards, two of the 60th Rifles, and a small party of the rocket corps, had been passed to the right bank. All seemed quiet in their front; when, suddenly, about five o'clock in the evening, two columns issued from the citadel to attack this detachment. Colonel Stopford, in command, drew up his troops in a position that secured his flanks, and enabled him to avail himself of the support of the guns on the opposite bank. His right rested on the Adour, his left on a morass. The artillery could sweep his front with a defensive fire, and he judiciously placed his rocket men on each flank. The French had nearly 1500 men, and advanced to the attack with some show of resolution; when the rockets opened on them, and being well directed, swept through their ranks with so rushing a sound, and so destructive an effect, that the novelty startled and appalled them. They seemed paralyzed with astonishment, and a few quickly following discharges of the ground-rockets drove them back in haste and fear. More men were crossed over in the night at slack water; and on the following evening the first division, two guns, and a squadron of dragoons, were established on the right bank."³

The flotilla appeared off the Adour on the morning of the 25th, the bar was successfully passed, thirty-four *chasse-marées* were brought into position, and anchored head and stern upon the line selected; the sappers worked all night, and by noon next day a solid bridge was laid down. Troops and artillery now filed over it, and the citadel of Bayonne was invested.

Upon the morning of 14 April the governor of the citadel made a furious sortie upon the investing corps, which was wholly unprepared for the attack, as peace had been declared, and Bonaparte had abdicated on 5 April. The news had reached Bayonne; the commandant of the citadel was well aware of it, but could not resist the treacherous attempt to retrieve his laurels by catching the British unprepared.

His assault was repulsed, with the loss of 830 men to the British, and with the capture of Sir John Hope, who was wounded. The French attack was supported by the fire of the gunboats on the river, which opened indiscriminately on friend and foe. The French lost 910 men.

The cemetery where our gallant fellow-countrymen lie who thus fell is on the edge of the Landes, on the north side of the Adour. When Queen Victoria visited Biarritz, as also recently when King Edward VII was there, this cemetery was duly visited by both monarchs. No one who remains any length of time in Bayonne should omit a visit to the beautiful lakes that lie embosomed in cork woods and pine forests in the Landes, in the abandoned course of the Adour. The river, instead of entering the sea where it does now, formerly turned north, and had its mouth at Cape Breton, something like ten miles distant. But at the close of the fourteenth century a violent tempest blowing from the west threw up a barrier of sand and blocked the mouth of the Adour, which then pursued its course northward, and finally discharged its waters into the Atlantic at Vieux-Boucau, and that

³ Sherer, *Military Memoirs of the Duke of Wellington*. London, 1832.

remained its mouth for two centuries. But in 1579 the inhabitants of Bayonne, aided by a flood, managed to pierce the isthmus of sand-hills which separated their town from the sea, and thus created a new mouth for the river. The Adour, however, pours into the bay in a contrary direction to the prevailing winds, consequently there is an incessant struggle going on there between the current and the waves, resulting in a deposit of mud, sand, and pebble, and the building up of a bar which the sea is incessantly driving towards the shore, whereas the river is as incessantly engaged in repelling it. The existence of this bar makes the entrance to the Adour difficult and even dangerous, and has necessitated expensive works.

The lakes in the Landes are a haunt of wild fowl, and afford good fishing.

Biarritz needs little more than a mention, though a place of some antiquity. It is spoken of in the eleventh century, when some Basques harpooned a whale in the Bay of Biscay. It thrived on the whale fishery, and so wealthy did it become that the tithe of its revenue constituted the principal source of the income of the bishops of Bayonne. In course of time the whales abandoned the coast and migrated to the north, and then the prosperity of Biarritz declined, and it sank to being an insignificant fishing village, till the Empress Eugénie took a fancy to it, and a new era of prosperity began. It is now a fashionable resort, especially for Spanish nobles. The heaths around in early summer are lovely with the intensely blue *Lithospermum*, and the crimson *Daphne cneorum*.

Visitors to Biarritz make an expedition to the "Refuge," distant about three miles, over a heath. The Abbé Cézac had founded an orphanage at Bayonne for girls, and had placed it under the charge of the Servantes de Marie. Not content with this good work he gathered about him a number of penitents and lodged them in the attics of the orphanage. Then in 1839 he bought a little property near Biarritz, and moved his penitents to it and placed them under the control of his sister Madelaine.

"Complete isolation, absolute silence, total abstinence from flesh meat, manual labour in the garden and graveyard, constant prayer in the church, or meditation in their cells, constitute their rule of life. Like the Trappists, their bed is a hard board, to which they retire at eight in the evening to rise at four in the morning. On Friday they take a meal which serves for dinner – unseasoned vegetables – on their knees. They never read a book, except one of devotion, and are entirely ignorant of the politics and changes of society. This holy Thebaid is shut out from all view of the external world; neither ocean nor river, nor plain nor hill, can be discerned from it, although Nature, immediately outside its limits, presents herself in her loveliest aspects of sea and mountain. Unbroken silence and solitude prevail, and the stranger who enters its sacred seclusion becomes involuntarily overpowered by the sentiment that pervades the atmosphere and fills the mind with awe and wonder."⁴

I should add, with indignation that human beings, even penitents, should be reduced by this method to stultification.

S. Jean de Luz is a favourite bathing place for such as desire more quiet and less heavy hotel charges than Biarritz affords. In 1660 the church saw the marriage of Louis XIV and Maria Theresa, Infanta of Spain. In commemoration of this event, the magistrates walled up the door by which the bridal pair passed out, and it has remained thus shut to this day. At S. Jean de Luz may be seen what is usual in Basque and Béarnais churches, as also in Tyrol, the men occupying the galleries, not infrequently in double tiers, whilst the women fill the body of the church. In the Maison Lobobiagne, with turrets, lodged Louis XIV; the Infanta and her mother, Anne of Austria, occupied the Maison Joanoëna.

⁴ Lawlor, *Pilgrimages in the Pyrenees*. London, 1870.

I can recall rides *en cacolet* as customary among the Basques some sixty years ago, now quite obsolete. A horse was furnished with two baskets, one on each side, and two persons were accommodated, one in each basket. Inglis says in 1835: —

“Morning, noon, and evening, the road between Bayonne and Biarritz is crowded with travellers *en cacolet*. The horses belong generally to the women who drive them; these women are generally young, many of them handsome. They generally speak French, Basque, and a little Spanish, and are rather intelligent than otherwise, always carrying on an unintermitting conversation during the whole ride. The horses are usually indifferent; they go at a small trot, and perform the *trajet* in about forty minutes.”

One of the most puzzling facts in the study of mankind is the manner in which the most unmeaning customs are found extended far and wide. I shall have something to say of the *couvade* in another chapter. There is another which is met with in the Basque country, and which is also, or was, usual in Yorkshire. On Easter Monday the girls seize on lads and heave them up in the air, and hold them aloft till they redeem themselves with a coin or a kiss. On Tuesday the boys enjoy the same privilege with the girls. I have been so lifted up near Bayonne. I recall an instance in Yorkshire, where H.M. Inspector of Schools, a grave and reverend signor, came to a manufacturing town on Easter Monday. As he was sedately walking from the station he encountered a bevy of mill lasses, when at once he was uplifted by them and carried in triumph, in vain expostulating, and a kiss from him was demanded by each before he was released.

So with April Fools' Day — *le poisson d'avril* — it is honoured in the same fashion in Hindustan as in Europe.

Few visitors to Biarritz fail to take a run over the frontier into Spain. The Bidassoa for about twelve miles forms the line of demarcation between France and Spain. Near the bridge of Behobia are the remains — they are nothing more — of the Ile des Faisans, on which conferences were held between Cardinal Mazarin, plenipotentiary for France, and Don Luis da Haro, acting for Spain, which led to the conclusion of the famous Treaty of the Pyrenees, in 1659, cemented by the marriage of Louis XIV with the daughter of Philip IV. At the meeting on the Ile des Faisans each party advanced from its own territory by a temporary bridge to this patch of neutral ground in mid-stream. The death of Velasquez, the painter, was due to exposure whilst superintending the decoration of the tent for the minister of Spain — a duty more befitting an upholsterer than a great artist. By the treaty France received la Cerdagne and Roussillon, but surrendered Lorraine to Duke Charles IV, on condition that he should dismantle all its fortresses. As he delayed doing this Louis retained his hold on the duchy.

Fontarabie (Fuenterrabia) does not signify the Fountain of Arabia, and retains in its name no reminiscence of Moorish domination; the derivation is from the Latin *fons rapidus*. It is a picturesque, dirty town, malodorous; bearing as its arms in quarterings an angel holding a key, to signify that the town holds the key of Spain — a squalid beggar would be more appropriate than an angel; a whale and two syrens, the whale to indicate the fishing of the leviathan, now long departed; and lastly a castle between two stars. These arms were accorded to Fuenterrabia by Philip IV in 1638, when the admiral of Castile repulsed the Prince of Condé, who was besieging it. The church, Gothic in style, has been modernized externally; within it is overloaded with barbaric ornament. The castle, known as the palace of Charles V, dates originally from the tenth century, but has undergone much rebuilding and adaptation. The courtyard is picturesque, and the terrace commands a beautiful view.

Fuenterrabia brings no pleasing remembrances to an Englishman. The citizens begrudged a lodging to our sick and wounded during the passage of the Pyrenees by the allied troops under Wellington when in pursuit of Soult in the depth of winter. The town authorities even wanted to take away the boards on which were stretched the disabled soldiers. “These,” wrote the Duke, “are the people to whom we have given medicines, etc., whose wounded and sick we have taken into our

hospitals, and to whom we have rendered every service in our power, after having recovered their country from the enemy.”

Irun signifies in Basque “the good town,” but it contains little that is good, nothing that is interesting. Passages, however, will arrest the traveller, owing to its picturesque harbour, land-locked, and the entrance commanded by the castles – reminding a Devonshire man of Dartmouth. The port has been neglected and suffered to be silted up, although the rock-bound coast possesses no better harbour of refuge for storm-tossed boats.

San Sebastian has suffered so severely from sieges that it has lost its medieval character; but nothing can destroy its natural beauty of situation. The Monte Urgull, on which is the castle, was originally a rocky island, but it has been united to the land by the deposits of the River Urumea, and the town now occupies this neck. Beyond is the concha, a semi-lunar bay, with excellent sands, and with the Isle of Sta. Clara breaking the force of the waves that roll in from the Atlantic. San Sebastian is the most fashionable seaside resort in Spain, and is much frequented by the nobility and by well-to-do citizens of Madrid. The church of S. Vincent is a Gothic edifice of 1507. San Sebastian is memorable for its siege by Wellington. Mr. Ford says: —

“It was obtained in March, 1808, by Therenot, when the French got in under false pretences. They held it during the war, and being in the rear of the Duke when advancing in 1815 on the Pyrenees, it retarded his progress, and its possession became absolutely necessary. This was a work of great difficulty, for the naturally strong position was garrisoned by 3000 brave French veterans under General Rey, and the Duke, from the usual neglect of our Government, in spite of repeated applications to Lord Bathurst, was forced to wait from 25 July to 26 August for want of means even to commence operations, during which time the active enemy strengthened their defences, being supplied from France by sea.

“In vain the Duke had warned Lord Melville, under whose fatal rule the navy of England was first exposed to defeat, and who now did his best to ensure a similar misfortune to the army. And to make matters worse, Graham, to whom the siege was entrusted, neglected the advice of Sir C. Felix Smith and of Sir R. Fletcher. Graham having failed in a night attack on 24 August, the Duke was forced to come in person to set matters right. His arrival was, as usual, the omen of victory. Now the town was assaulted as it ought to have been at first, from the *chafres* or sand banks, and was taken on 31 August. The French, after a most gallant defence, retired to the upper citadel, on which, by the almost superhuman efforts of the engineers, backed by the bluejackets, guns were brought to bear, and it surrendered on 9 September, two-thirds of the valorous garrison having perished, while nearly 5000 English troops were killed and wounded.”

Wellington – then only the Marquess Wellesley – had not bombarded the town, so as to spare the inhabitants, but General Rey himself had set fire to the town on 22 July, as is admitted by him in his own dispatch, and it was done for the express purpose of hampering the progress of the English, when he saw that the place must inevitably fall; and this, when Wellington would not suffer his batteries to play upon the town.

When finally San Sebastian was taken, all control over the soldiers, who were exasperated by the stubborn resistance, was for a while lost. A thunderstorm burst at the same time that the soldiers broke in, and a scene of riot and rapine ensued. In the midst of explosions of thunder and lightning the city was sacked. Fires broke out in various places, and flames waved over such houses as had been spared by Rey. At the same time the garrison of the castle ploughed the streets with their artillery, killing alike inhabitants flying from the English, Spanish and Portuguese soldiery, as well as the soldiers themselves. It was found impossible to extinguish the flames or to control the soldiers.

The most was made of this. Napoleon wrote: “Les Anglais commettent des horreurs dont les annales de la guerre offrent peu d'exemples, et dont cette nation barbare était seule capable dans un siècle de civilisation.” But Napoleon never minced words. The sack of San Sebastian, though regrettable, was mild in comparison with the atrocities committed by the French elsewhere in Spain. In justice it must be said that it was not English alone who were guilty of these excesses, but the far more lawless Spaniards and Portuguese who formed our allies, and that the sack was stopped as soon as ever Wellington was able to gain control over the maddened soldiery.

CHAPTER IV

S. JEAN-PIED-DE-PORT

Four valleys – The Basque land – Quarrels with Bayonne – The Sieur de Puyane – Cambo – Itxasson – Pas de Roland – Stalagmitic saint – S. Jean-Pied-de-Port – The first book in Basque – Patronal feasts – Roncevaux – The Song of Roland – The history of Turpin – Death of Roland – His horn – Convent – Canons – Virgin with diamonds in her eyes – Spanish kitchen – Smugglers – Escape of the Princess of Beira – The Couvade.

From the ridge of the Western Pyrenees descend four large valleys towards the north, each with a river running at the bottom. The westernmost and least important is that of the Nivelet, that flows into the Bay of Biscay at S. Jean de Luz. The second thence is the Nive, that discharges its waters into the Adour at Bayonne. The third is the Bidouze, which reaches the Adour just below where that river receives the mingled waters of the two Gaves. The last of these, and the easternmost of these rivers, is the Cenon, that loses itself in the Gave of Oloron, near Sauveterre.

In the ancient geography of France these four valleys were somewhat irregularly divided into districts, of which the westernmost was called Labourde, and the easternmost Soule, and the central portion was Lower Navarre. Taken collectively these districts constitute the Basque land, the population of which was closely related in language, habits, and blood to the inhabitants of Biscay, Guipuzcoa, and Upper Navarre in Spain. The narrow strip of land comprising the two cantons of S. Palais and S. Jean-pied-de-Port was for many centuries regarded as forming a parcel of the province of Gascony, but Alphonso the Noble took it, together with Labourde, from the English King John, so that it became a portion of the kingdom of Navarre, though Bayonne was recovered by the English. Sancho, King of Navarre, strengthened his hold on it more firmly, but eventually, when the claim to the crown of Navarre passed to the Counts of Foix and Viscounts of Béarn, it was the sole portion of that kingdom that these latter were able to retain, the Spanish Navarre having been annexed by Ferdinand the Catholic.

The Basques never obtained political independence. They were always subjected to Frank or English domination; they passed under the rule of the kings of Navarre and counts of Foix, and finally under the crown of France. Nevertheless they succeeded in maintaining a communal right of self-government, and enjoyed great privileges, notably that of conveying their wares and those of Spain free of duty to the markets of Toulouse and Bordeaux; rights these that awoke the jealousy of the citizens of Bayonne, who were incessantly at feud with them. The Bayonnais claimed Villefranche as belonging to Labourde, because the tide flowed through the arches of the bridge there. In an affray over this the mountaineers killed several citizens of Bayonne. In reprisal, in the reign of Edward III of England, Duke of Gascony and Aquitaine, the mayor of Bayonne, a Sieur de Puyane, descended on Villefranche on S. Bartholomew's Day, when a fair was being held there, caught five burgesses of note and fastened them to the arches of the bridge, and let them drown to show by ocular demonstration that the tide did rise to Villefranche, and that therefore it was within the jurisdiction of Bayonne. The Basques rose *en masse* and massacred the Labourdins wherever they caught them. Finally, both parties appealed to the arbitration of the Sieur d'Albret, and the town of Bayonne was condemned to pay a heavy sum as indemnity to the families of the drowned men. The Bayonnais appealed to the King of England. He mitigated the fine, but the Basques would only consent to his adjudication on condition of reserving the right to pursue the sons of the Sieur de Puyane till they had exterminated the family. This was the last act by which the Basque nation manifested its political existence. But they retained their special privileges till the French Revolution, when the common law of France superseded all local independence of jurisdiction.

Cambo is a pretty, pleasant place, that has of late years risen to notice as a health resort. It takes its name from what has been supposed to be an Euscaldunic, i.e. Basque camp. I planned this and sent plan and description to the *Archæologia*, in 1852. But with greater experience of ancient camps than I had then, I have come to doubt whether it is what has been supposed. It consists of a platform on a hillock with a network of trenches about it, and ridges between them sharp as the back of a knife. It may have been used as a camp of refuge, but it could not contain a large force, and the dykes around appear to have been formed by currents of water.

Itxasson is an eminently Basque village. The church contains rich ornaments of silver gilt for the altar, given in the eighteenth century by an emigrant, Pedro d'Echegaray, on his return from America, where he had realized a fortune. The Basques, it may be noticed, do not give their names to houses and farms, but assume as surnames those place names from which they came.

From Itxasson the Pas de Roland is reached in half an hour on foot. It is an archway bored in the crag beside the river. Road and railway have so maltreated the rock that the Pas is now hardly worth a special visit. It was through this arch that the Roman road passed, and through it Roland the Paladin went to his death at Roncevaux. According to local legend Roland set his foot against the rock and burst a way through it by pressure. Road and rail now enter the mountains following the river.

At Bidarray, on the mountain-side, is a grotto, about thirty feet deep. In one corner a ladder conducts to a cavity, at the back of which is a stalagmitic incrustation three feet high, of a livid hue, rudely representing a human torso. This is held in high veneration by the peasantry, and is called "the Saint of Bidarry," though who the saint was whom it is supposed to represent nobody can say. A very similar incrustation occupies a niche in the Gorge of the Ardèche, and is there held to be a lively presentation of Charlemagne. Sick people seek this cave and soak rags in the water that dribbles from the figure, and which has in fact built it up. They apply the rags to the suffering parts of their bodies, and depart believing themselves to be healed, but the rags are left behind as *ex votos*.

S. Jean-Pied-de-Port was the key to the port or pass into Spain, and especially to the communication between Upper and Lower Navarre. It occupies a point where three streams fall into the Nive. There had been a Gallo-Roman town three miles distant at S. Jean-le-Vieux, but it had been destroyed by the Saracens. The present town was founded by the Garcias, kings of Navarre, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. S. Jean, from the Treaty of the Pyrenees to the Revolution, during three reigns, was the capital of French Navarre. There are several old houses in the town, some of the Renaissance Period, and owing to their being built of red sandstone have a warm and pleasant aspect. The citadel was constructed by Deville in 1668, but was remodelled by Vauban, as were also the ramparts of the town.

The first book in Basque that was printed and published was by Bernard d'Echepare, curé of S. Jean-Pied-de-Port, in 1545. It consists of two parts. The first contains Christian doctrine, moral sentences, and passages from Scripture, good for edification. But strangely united with this, under the same cover and with continuous numeration of pages, is a collection of the priest's erotic poems.

Si ... turpiter atrum
Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,
Spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?

He frankly admits that he had had his love adventures. "I would not go to heaven, not I," he tells us, "unless I were sure of meeting women there."

He gives us a picture of female charms too highly coloured to bear reproduction. He throws in episodes from his own experience. In one of his escapades he got into such a scrape that he was incarcerated by order of the king of Navarre. "Il est à regretter," says Michel, "qu'il se soit borné à nous parler de sa détention, sans en indiquer ni la cause, ni le lieu, ni l'époque."

S. Jean-Pied-de-Port should be visited at the time of its patronal fête, 15 to 18 August, where day and night are given up to concerts, games, masquerades, and allegorical dances performed by the peasants of la Haute Soule.

But should a visitor be there at midsummer he should make an effort to push on to Pampeluna for the fête of 7 July, when for over a week the city keeps holiday —*les gigantes* parade the streets, monstrous figures, representing Moors; and the Alcalde and Corporation dance in front of the cathedral in honour of S. Firmin, the patron saint. He will, moreover, have an opportunity of seeing the pretty Navarrese girls, who have come out of the country for the great annual merry-making.

But the place of highest historic and romantic interest to be visited from S. Jean-Pied-de-Port is Roncevaux. Here, on 15 August, 778, the army of Charlemagne met with a crushing defeat, in which Roland and the twelve peers of the emperor were overwhelmed by rocks hurled down on them by the Basques.

The contemporary Eginhard tells us that the king invaded Spain at the head of a huge army, pushed on as far as Saragossa, and there received hostages from the Saracen chiefs. On his return, whilst entangled in the Pyrenean pass, the Basques attacked his rearguard, which perished to a man. Most of the officers of the palace, to whom Charlemagne had confided the command of the troops, were among the slain, and with them “Roland, prefect of the Marches of Brittany.”

No revenge could be taken for this disaster, as the light-footed mountaineers dispersed, and could not be reached. This is all we know for certain, but even in this account the existence of Roland among the captains slain is doubtful, as the passage referring to him is an interpolation, and is not found in the best MSS. copies.

In 810 Louis “le Debonaire,” at that time King of Aquitaine, on his return from an expedition into Spain, took the precaution of securing the wives and children of the Basques and retaining them as hostages till he was safely through the pass. But in 824 the Frank army descended to Pampeluna, under two counts, and on its way back was surprised at Roncevaux by the Basques; the troops were slaughtered and the counts taken. These two disasters in popular tradition were run into one, and gave occasion to the composition of the “Song of Roland,” one of the finest pieces of medieval poetry that we possess.

“The Song of Roland,” says Mr. Ludlow, “apart from any question of literary merit, has a peculiar interest for our country, not only as forming one of the treasures of the Bodleian, but from its connexion with one of the half dozen greatest events in our history – the Battle of Hastings. For there, as we are told by Wace, William of Normandy’s minstrel ‘Taillefer who full well sang, on a horse that was swift, went before them singing *Of Charlemagne and of Roland, and of Oliver and of the vassals who died at Roncevaux.*’”⁵

The very earliest text extant of this poem is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. All other songs of Roland are amplifications of later date.

Thus it appears that to the chanting of this ballad by a minstrel William went forward to the conquest of England.

One of the most popular books of the Middle Ages was the *History of the Life of Charlemagne and of his Nephew Roland*, which passed as the composition of Turpin, Archbishop of Rheims, a man who died about 800. It was a historical romance based on old ballads, composed in the twelfth century, and of no historic value whatsoever. Pope Callixtus II formally decided, however, in 1122, that it was veracious history.

In this book we have the fully-developed story of the defeat at Roncevaux. In it, declared by an infallible Pope to be authentic and trustworthy, we are informed that Charlemagne was eight feet

⁵ Ludlow, *Popular Epics of the Middle Ages*. London, 1865.

high, measured by his own feet, “which were of the largest size,” that at a meal he would consume a quarter of a sheep, and if that were not at hand, then he would appease his appetite with two fowls, or a duck, a peacock, a crane, or a hare.

The army had marched into Spain, and Roland and Ganilon the Traitor had been sent forward to Saragossa on an embassy to the Soudan, who, according to the counsel of Ganilon, spake fair and consented to all Charlemagne’s demands. Consequently the host of the Franks returned through the Pyrenees, unsuspecting of evil. Charles led the van, and Roland and Oliver the rearguard. Meanwhile the Saracens had gone about by bypaths, and they suddenly appeared to intercept the march of that body of men which was under the command of Roland and Oliver. A furious fight ensued, Oliver fell, and Roland alone survived. Then he put his ivory horn to his lips and blew such a blast that Charles heard it, though many leagues away, and he knew thereby that his nephew was in danger. With the blast Roland broke a blood-vessel, and, sinking to the ground, he dashed his good sword Durandal against the rocks with intent to break it, lest it should fall into the hands of the paynim.

To this day at Roncevaux a mass is said in May above the tombs of the paladins, in the little chapel supposed to have been founded by Charlemagne, and this mass is for the repose of the souls of those who fell in the massacre of Roncevaux.

Roncevaux itself consists of a few poor huts about a monumental convent, from the midst of which rises the church with a massive square tower. The “royal and illustrious collegiate church” was considered in Spain to be the fourth in order of the holy spots on earth. The other three were Jerusalem, Rome, and Compostella. The chapter was under the special protection of the Holy See, and the King of Spain nominated the prior. This dignitary and six canons are all that remain of the ancient order of Roncevaux. Throughout the convent may be seen its badge, a cross, the middle member curved at the head like a pastoral staff, and with a sword at the feet.

Pilgrims from France, Germany, and Italy were wont to cross the Pyrenees on their way to Compostella, and many lost their lives in the snow. On this account, in 1131, the Bishop of Pampeluna founded a hospital at Roncevaux for their accommodation, and he dispatched one of the canons of his cathedral to attend to the requirements and comforts of the pilgrims. This was the origin of the convent that grew rich with the gifts of kings and princes who were lodged there. The canons of Roncevaux wear a sleeveless surplice and a black amice over their shoulders in summer, but in winter a thick black cloak and a furred hood. When they go out they wear a short linen scapular over their cassocks.

Under the tower is a Gothic hall. This, with the cloister and the church, was erected by Sanchez the Strong, King of Navarre, in the thirteenth century. He and his wife repose in the church under a marble tomb.

In this church is a Mater Dolorosa, the eyes of which are apparently full of tears. This appearance is due to the insertion of diamonds, but the ignorant peasantry are fully convinced that the eyes of the Madonna really brim with tears for their sorrows, and out of profound compassion.

Near the convent formerly stood a pillar commemorative of the defeat of Charlemagne’s rearguard, but the monument was destroyed in 1794 by two commissioners of the French Republic, to the performance of a “musique touchante.” These men headed a column called l’Infernale; it entered Spanish territory, and carried fire and sword everywhere. They pillaged the church and the convent, and wrecked all they could lay hands on.

Over this pass fled Joseph Bonaparte, without his crown, after the rout of Vittoria. At Roncevaux is a little inn where the traveller has an opportunity of seeing a Spanish kitchen, with a central hearth, about which are ranged as many little saucepans as there are visitors to be entertained, and of hearing the custom-house officers play the guitar, and seeing the muleteers dancing the fandango.

Smuggling thrives in the Pyrenees, indeed it is impossible to suppress it. The most daring and successful of all smugglers are the Basques, and the mountains in their part not being of the loftiest, free trade can be carried on with comparative ease. F. Michel, in *Le Pays Basque*, says: —

“Contraband is a veritable profession that employs a great many hands. Men thoroughly upright and strictly honest take part in it. The chiefs are well known, and one is certain of meeting with fidelity, integrity, and chivalrous devotion among them. This may be understood, because their profession depends mainly on the confidence which their character inspires, and without which the merchants would not venture to have recourse to them.”

Consider what the length of the chain is – 350 miles as the crow flies, 500 if you follow the frontier line. Tobacco is a Government monopoly in France, and French tobacco is execrable. There are in that 500 miles a thousand passes: some easy, others difficult. The douane cannot be everywhere; it can be planted at certain fixed points, but the officers are not ubiquitous, cannot guard every port, for the ports are in the region of perpetual snow, where, if stationed, the officers would freeze at their posts. Besides, the douanier gravitates instinctively towards the cabaret, where he can have his wine, his coffee, his absinthe, about a stove. And none of the taverns are planted on the more difficult cols. Consequently a very considerable traffic is done across the frontier by these honourable and intelligent men, the smugglers.

In November, 1835, the Princess of Beira was on her way from Naples to Spain to be married to the Pretender, Don Carlos. She was his sister-in-law, but at Rome dispensations are ever obtainable for money.

Ferdinand VII, by his third wife, Maria Christina, daughter of Francis I, King of the Two Sicilies, had a daughter, Isabella, born in 1830. Now Don Carlos was the brother of Ferdinand. When this latter died, in 1834, Carlos claimed the crown. Queen Christina had become regent, whilst Isabella was a minor. Carlos went to the north of Spain, and war broke out between the Carlists and the Christinos. Spain, Portugal, England, and France united in quadruple alliance to support the claims of Queen Christina. Carlos was in the Spanish Biscay, and he summoned to him his son by his wife Maria Frances, who was dead, and also his intended wife, the Princess of Beira. This lady undertook to leave Naples, traverse France, pick up on her way the Prince of the Asturias, who was at Toulouse, and join her intended husband in the Basque province of Spain.

Her journey had to be carried out with precaution, as France opposed the pretensions of Don Carlos. She managed, attended by the Count Custine and a Portuguese lady, to secure the Prince of the Asturias and to make her way to Bayonne. There she remained awhile in concealment till warned that her retreat was discovered, when she fled and delivered herself up to the protection and guidance of some smugglers. After a day spent in wandering through the forest of Mixe, with which her guides were unfamiliar, she reached in the evening the valley of Miharín, between Hasparren and S. Palais. It had been arranged that she should sup at the cabaret of Sallubria; but the place was so squalid that Count Custine advised the Princess to throw herself on the hospitality of the Viscount de Belsunce, who had a château hard by. This she did, and was received with the utmost civility, though it was not allowed to transpire who she was. Thence one of the smuggler guides, Baptista Etchegoyen, was dispatched with instructions to the contraband Captain Ganis to aid the Princess in her escape. He arrived in the middle of the night with some of his band, and with horses carrying bundles containing disguises.

In order to reach the frontier it was necessary to pass through Héritte, a station of douaniers, on the high road from Bayonne to S. Jean-Pied-de-Port. In order to effect this, Ganis took advantage of a funeral that was to take place at half-past ten in the morning. He left Méharin at 9 a.m. attending the two ladies, dressed as mourners. At a little distance from the place the Princess and her attendant had to alight and go direct to the church, where Ganis informed her they were to place themselves

behind a tall woman in mourning, and to follow her when she left the church. The ladies assisted at the office for the dead, with hoods concealing their faces. They followed the corpse to the cemetery, and passed the station of the douaniers without attracting attention. On reaching a valley they found horses awaiting them, and by evening they had reached Macaye, near Hasparren, where they lodged in the house of Ganis.

Fatigued by the journey, the Princess hoped to pass a quiet night, but soon after dark an alarm was given. Fifteen to eighteen hundred men – soldiers, gendarmes, and douaniers – were patrolling the country in quest of the Princess. A party of these men, suspecting that she was under the protection of Ganis, approached the house with the purpose of searching it. The smuggler roused the ladies, made them follow him on foot, and under his conduct they reached the banks of a river that was swelled by the rain then descending in torrents. Ganis took the Princess on his back, and stepped into the water. He was followed by his brother with the lady-in-waiting. The flood rose to his armpits, and he had the utmost difficulty in struggling across. Before he had reached the further bank he heard shouts, and looking back, saw a crowd of uniforms on that he had quitted. The smugglers and their charges now made for the road into Spain by Anhoue, and succeeded in passing the frontier without further adventures.

Next morning the south wind bore to Bayonne the joyous clatter of the bells of Urdase, and of all the Spanish villages over the frontier, celebrating the marriage of the Princess of Beira with the Pretender, Don Carlos of Bourbon. In the meantime the Count Custine had remained with the Prince of the Asturias in the château of M. de Belsunce. Baptista now returned for them. They were disguised as Basque peasants, mounted horses, and departed under the conduct of the energetic and indefatigable Etchegoyen, who conducted them by a different route from that taken by the Princess, to where they met her and the Prince, his father.

It would be unpardonable to quit the Basques without a few words on the Couvade, a custom once prevalent among them, but by no means peculiar to them, as it has been found in Asia, Africa, and America.

Immediately after childbirth the woman rises and goes about the business of the house, whereas the husband at once retires to bed with the baby, receives the congratulations of the neighbours, and is fed on broth and pap during ten days. Strabo mentions this usage above eighteen hundred years ago as prevalent among the Iberians, the ancestors of the Basques. “The women,” he says, “after the birth of a child, nurse their husbands, putting them to bed instead of going to it themselves.” That this custom was widely spread in the south of France appears from the medieval tale of *Aucassin and Nicolette*. In it the hero finds King Theodore *au lit en couche*, whereupon he takes a stick and thrashes him till he vows to abolish the Couvade in his realms. Diodorus Siculus, at the beginning of the Christian era, tells us that this custom also prevailed in Corsica.

Marco Polo, in the thirteenth century, met with it in Eastern Asia, so that the widow’s remark to Sir Hudibras was not amiss —

“Chineses go to bed
And lie-in in their ladies’ stead.”

The same custom is found among the American Indians.

What can be its meaning? What topsy-turvydom of the human brain can have originated it? Mr. Tylor, in his *Early History of Mankind*, says that it proceeded from a notion that the woman was a mere machine for the turning out of babies, and that the babes were not in the least supposed to belong to her, but to the father. Also that the child was part and parcel of the father, a feeble and frail parcel, and that the utmost precaution had to be taken to keep the male parent in health lest the child should suffer. If the father were to take a pinch of snuff, the infant would sneeze its brains away; if he were to eat solid food, the babe would suffer indigestion. A missionary found it impossible to

persuade his Indian servant to eat anything but slops directly after the birth of a son and heir, as he was persuaded heavy diet would injure the child. Then the missionary belaboured his servant with a stick, and sent him to look at his infant smiling in its sleep, and so convinced the man of his delusion.

This may be the explanation. I cannot say. Mankind does many things out of sheer cussedness.

CHAPTER V

ORTHEZ

Court of the counts of Foix – Froissart – Gaston Phœbus – Kills his son – And a cousin – Death of Phœbus – Evan de Foix – The bastards of Phœbus – Tragic death of Evan – Bridge over the Gave – Jeanne d’Albret – Her despotic actions – Flight to La Rochelle – Charles sends La Terride into Béarn – Jeanne invites Montgomery to her aid – He enters Béarn – Takes Orthez – Massacre – The castle capitulates – Broken faith – Murder of ten barons – Slaughter of priests and monks – Catholic worship forbidden – Death of Jeanne – Castle of Belocq – Puyôo – Battlefield of Orthez – Retreat of Soult.

Orthez has little to occupy it save to brood over its past. It is a dull town, without characteristic features, and it sulks because Pau the parvenue is flourishing, and flaunting, whilst itself, the venerable Orthez, the once capital, sits as a widow, desolate.

Till the fifteenth century it was the residence of the Court of the counts of Foix and viscounts of Béarn, whose castle of Moncada occupied the height above the town. A splendid pile it was, erected by Gaston VII, in 1240, after the pattern of a Spanish castle of the name that he had taken. This had proved to him a hard nut to crack, and he hoped to make the new Moncada by additional works wholly uncrackable. But the tooth of Time has broken it completely, and nothing of it now remains save the keep.

The town was astir and aglow when Gaston Phœbus resided in the castle. Froissart so describes it. Minstrels, merchants, knights, adventurers, swarmed in the streets, and streamed into the castle, which they did not leave empty-handed. “I have heard him say, when the King of Cyprus was in Béarn proposing a crusade, that if the kings of France and of England had gone to the Holy Land, he himself would have been the most considerable lord in the host, second only to them, and would have led the largest contingent.”

Gaston Phœbus, Count of Foix and Viscount of Béarn, was the son of Gaston IX and the elderly Eleanor de Cominges. On account of his beauty he was given the name of Phœbus, and he adopted the blazing sun as his device. He was arrested by King John of France when at Paris because he refused to do homage for his lands, but was released and given command of an army in Guyenne to war against the English.

Froissart visited Orthez, and lodged at the tavern “La Lune,” now rebuilt and renamed “La belle Hôtesse.”

“I must say,” wrote he, “that although I have seen many knights, kings, princes, and other great men, I have never seen any so handsome as he, either in mould of limb and shape, or in countenance, which was fair and ruddy, lit up with grey, amorous eyes, that delighted whenever he chose to express affection. He was so perfectly formed that it is not possible to overpraise him. Gaston Phœbus was a prudent knight, full of enterprise and wisdom. He never allowed men of abandoned character to be about his person; he reigned prudently, and was constant at his devotions. He mightily loved dogs above other animals, and during the summer and winter amused himself with hunting. He employed four secretaries, whom he called neither John, Walter, nor William, but his Good-for-noughts, and to these he gave his letters to copy out.”

But this prince was no other than a lusty, handsome animal, incapable of controlling his passions, and whilst profuse in largesses to wandering *jongleurs* and travellers, who would bruit abroad his praises, mean in money matters in other particulars.

Gaston Phœbus succeeded his father in 1343, and in 1348 married Agnes, daughter of Philip III of Navarre. By her he had one son, Gaston, as beautiful as Phœbus himself, and an amiable youth. Before long the Count and his wife fell out. The quarrel was sordid – it concerned money. Phœbus had imprisoned the Sieur d'Albret. The King of Navarre, Charles the Bad, brother of the Countess, interceded for his liberation, and undertook to guarantee payment of fifty thousand francs for his ransom. Accordingly Gaston released him, and d'Albret paid the money into the hands of the King of Navarre, who pocketed it, and declined to send it to the Count of Foix, under the plea that he was trustee for his sister and reserved it as her dower. The Count resented this upon his wife, whom he called by all the bad names in his copious vocabulary. He had taken a mistress, and he openly favoured her in the face of his wife for her humiliation. By this woman he had three sons. Then he ordered Agnes to visit the Court of Navarre and use her personal influence to obtain the money due. The Countess went, but failed to induce her brother to disburse; and knowing how ungovernable was the temper of her husband, how little he loved her, she shrank from returning to Orthez.

The boy Gaston at the age of fifteen entreated leave to visit his mother at Pampeluna. The lad was distressed at the estrangement, and pined for his mother. Accordingly his father gave him a splendid retinue of gallant youths, and the Bishop of Lescar as his chaplain. Charles the Bad resolved on a diabolical act of treachery. When the boy was leaving he drew him aside, assured him of his distress at seeing the lad's father alienated in heart from his mother, and gave him a bag of arsenic, which he informed him was a love powder. This he was to strew on his father's meat, or drop into his cup, when Phœbus's love for his wife would infallibly revive. But on no account, said Charles, was Gaston to breathe a word of this to any one, and he must be cautious to seize the right moment for the administration of the dose, when unobserved. Gaston, fully believing what his uncle said, hung the bag round his neck under his dress, and returned to Orthez.

Now it happened that Gaston and his half-brother, the bastard Evan, slept in the same room. They were nearly of the same age and size, and dressed alike. Evan did not fail to notice the silk bag and questioned Gaston about it, but was put off with evasive answers.

Three days after Evan and Gaston quarrelled over a game of tennis, and Gaston boxed his half-brother's ears. Evan ran to his father and told him that Gaston carried in his bosom a mysterious pouch of which he would give no account.

At dinner Phœbus was served by his son, Gaston, and looking hard at him observed the string about his neck. Laying hold of him, he tore open his vest, and discovered the bag of powder. He cut the string, and gave some of the white contents on a piece of meat to a dog, that ate it and died. Then in a paroxysm of rage, knife in hand, he leaped over the table, swearing that he would kill Gaston, who had purposed to poison him. He would have slain him on the spot had not his servants interposed and disarmed him.

The Count then ordered the boy to be thrown into a dungeon. At the same time he had all the attendants of the youth who had been with him in Navarre arrested and tortured, and fifteen of them were forthwith hung. "Which was a pity," says Froissart, "for there were not in all Gascony such handsome and well-appointed squires." The Bishop of Lescar had timely warning, and took to his heels.

The Count assembled the Estates of Béarn and laid before them his charge against the boy, and they unanimously decided that the prince must not be executed, but kept in durance for awhile; nor would they separate till they had extorted from Phœbus a solemn undertaking to submit to their decision.

But the poor lad, knowing his innocence, wounded to the quick at the manner in which he had been duped by his uncle, at the blind conviction of his guilt entertained by his father, at the barbarity

with which his companions had been racked, and strung up, refused all food. He was confined in a narrow dungeon, badly lighted, and his gaoler at first did not observe that the meals he brought him remained untouched. But on the tenth day – I quote Froissart —

“The person who served him, looking about the cell, saw all the meat unconsumed with which he had been previously supplied. Then, shutting the door, he went to the Count of Foix and said, ‘My lord, for God’s sake, look to your son, he is starving himself in his prison. I do not believe that he has eaten a morsel since his confinement.’ On hearing this the Count was enraged, and without saying a word went to his son’s prison. In an evil hour he had a knife in his hand, with which he had been paring his nails. He held it so close by the blade that of the point scarcely so much as the size of a groat showed.

“Thrusting aside the tapestry that covered the door of the dungeon, through ill luck he struck his son on the jugular vein, as he shouted, ‘Ha, traitor! why dost thou not eat?’ and instantly flung out of the chamber without saying or doing more. The lad was frightened at his father’s violence, and was, moreover, weak through long fasting. The point of the knife, small though it was, had severed the artery, and when he felt what had been done, he turned himself on one side on his pallet and expired.

“The Count had hardly returned to his apartment before his servants came running after him to announce the death of his son. ‘Dead is he? God help me!’ exclaimed the Count. ‘Dead he is, my lord.’ The Count was greatly affected, and said, ‘Ah, ha, Gaston! what a sorry business this has proved for me and thee.’”

This was by no means his only crime. He induced his cousin, Pierre Arnaut de Béarn, governor of the Castle of Lourdes, to visit him, on the plea that he wished to discuss matters with him. Arnaut held Lourdes for the English. Gaston Phœbus desired to acquire this stronghold, which was the key to the Valley of Argelez. He received Arnaut in a friendly manner, and they dined together. For three days he showed him lavish hospitality, and then demanded the surrender of the castle. Arnaut refused. “I hold it for the King of England. It has been confided to my honour,” he replied, “and to no other person will I surrender my trust.” Gaston Phœbus flew into one of his mad fits of rage, rushed upon him, and stabbed him in five places with his dagger. “My Lord,” said the gallant castellan, “this is ungentle treatment, to summon me to your house as a guest, and therein to murder me.” The Count ordered him to be flung into a dungeon, where he died of his wounds.

The crime availed Phœbus nothing, for Jean, the brother of Pierre, had been left in charge of the castle, and he refused to give it up.

The Viscount of Châteaubon, the Count’s cousin-germain, heir to his lands and titles, after the death of Gaston the younger, was greatly hated by Phœbus. He retained him in prison for eight months, and only released him for a ransom of fifty thousand francs. Froissart gives an account of the end of Phœbus. He had been out hunting near Sauveterre, in the month of August, when the heat was great. He had killed a boar, that was brought to the inn at Riou, where the Count would dine.

“The Count went to his chamber, that was strewn with rushes and green leaves; the walls were hung with boughs freshly cut for perfume and coolness. He had no sooner entered the room than he remarked, ‘These greens are agreeable to me, for the day has been desperately hot.’ When seated he conversed with Sir Espagne du Lyon (his chaplain) on the dogs that had best hunted. He called for water to wash, and two squires advanced. Ernaudin d’Espagne took the silver basin, and another knight, Sir Thibaut, the napkin. The Count rose from his seat, and stretched out his hands to wash; but no sooner had his fingers touched the cold water than he changed colour, from an oppression at his heart, and his legs failing him, fell back on his seat,

exclaiming, 'I am a dead man; but God have mercy on me!' He never spoke after this. He was carried to another chamber, and laid on a bed and well covered.

"The two squires who had brought the water, to free themselves from any charge of having poisoned him, said, 'Here is the water; we have already drunk of it, and will now do it again in your presence,' which they did, to the satisfaction of all. They put into the Count's mouth bread, water, and spices, but all to no purpose, for in less than half an hour he was dead."

No sooner was the breath out of his body than Evan de Foix, his bastard, whom he loved dearly, galloped to Orthez to get possession of the treasure in the tower. On his admission to the castle, before it was known in the town that the Count was dead, he endeavoured to open the chamber that contained the treasure, but failed; it was fast behind three oak doors, and he could nowhere find the key. But in the meanwhile the chaplain had found it upon the body of the Count, and guessing the predicament in which was Evan, he also took horse and raced off to Orthez.

By this time a vague rumour had reached the town that something had happened to the Count, and the townsmen began to assemble in the streets. The chaplain entered the castle, and now that he was provided with the key Evan de Foix was able to reach the treasure. But it was too late for him to make off with it. Before he could pack it up and form plans for its transport, the death of Gaston Phœbus was known, and crowds surrounded the castle and forbade egress. Evan was constrained to show himself at a window and speak the citizens fair. They wished him no ill, they replied, but they would neither suffer him to plunder and carry off the treasure, nor leave the castle, till the Viscount of Châteaubon, the lawful heir, had arrived – this latter was in Aragon at the time. He at once started for Orthez, and a great assembly of the Estates of Béarn was held. It was then determined that of the treasure, the Viscount should have five thousand francs, and the bastards, who had been put in chains till the will of the Estates was known, should be set at liberty and allowed each two thousand francs.

"The Viscount of Châteaubon, on his arrival at Orthez, set at liberty all prisoners confined in the castle. They were very numerous; for the Count of Foix was very cruel to any person who incurred his indignation, never sparing them, however high their rank, but ordering them to be flung headlong over the walls, or confined on bread and water during his pleasure; and such as ventured to speak for their deliverance ran the risk of being treated in like manner."

Gaston Phœbus was born in 1331, and died in 1391. He left three bastards; of these Bernard married Isabella de la Cerda, and became the ancestor of the dukes of Medina-Celi. The eldest son, Evan, he who had unwittingly brought about the death of his half-brother Gaston, met with a tragic fate. A marriage was to take place between a squire in whom the King, Charles VI, was interested and a damsel of the Queen's household, and it was arranged that there should be a masque of savages in the evening, 29 January, 1392–3, in which the King was to take part. There were to be six of these savages in chains, and they were to perform a dance before the wedding party, and one of these maskers was to be the Bastard of Foix. The performers were to be dressed in coats of linen covered with flax, stuck on by means of pitch, and these linen vests were to be stitched on so as to fit the person tight as a glove. Sir Evan de Foix, with some foresight, entreated the King to forbid any one approaching the dancers with torches. Such an order was accordingly issued, and when the maskers entered the room, the serjeants commanded all torch-bearers to withdraw. But, unhappily, whilst the savages were capering, and producing much merriment, the Duke of Orleans entered attended by four knights and six torches, they being not aware of the King's order, and so amused were those present with the dance that this infraction of the royal command was not noticed. No one knew who the maskers were, and various conjectures were offered. Happily for him the King quitted the others, by unhooking his chain, and danced up to the Duchess of Berri, who laid hold of him exclaiming, "You shall not escape me till I have learned your name."

At that very moment the Duke of Orleans, young and thoughtless, ran forward with a torch to examine the savages more closely. In an instant the flax on one ignited, in another moment the flame was communicated to the others, for those five were chained together; only the King was unlinked. The shrieks of those enveloped in flames were awful. Some knights rushed forward and did their utmost to disengage the dancers, but the pitch burnt their hands so severely, and so impossible did they find it to rip away the habits, that they were constrained to desist. One of the five, Jean de Nantouillet, recollected that the buttery was near at hand. Exerting all his force, he snapped the chain, and flying thither, plunged into a large tub of water prepared for the washing of plates and dishes. This saved him, but he ever after bore the scars of his burns.

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