

Poet's Corner.

WANTED.

Wanted—a hand to hold my own
As down life's vale I glide;
Wanted—an arm to lean upon,
Forever by my side.
Wanted—a firm and steady foot,
With step secure and free,
To take its strength and onward pace,
Over life's path with me.
Wanted—an eye within whose depths
Mine own might look and see
Uprising from a guiltless heart,
O'erflown with love for me.
Wanted—a lip whose kindest smile,
Would speak for me alone;
A voice, whose richest melody,
Would breathe affection's tone.
Wanted—a true, religious soul,
To pious purpose given,
With whom my own might pass along
The road that leads to Heaven.

[From Chambers' Repository.]

THE ROCK REPUBLIC.

A CHRONICLE OF

TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

CHAPTER I.

Some of the most remarkable and curious pages in history escape the attention even of the serious student, because they perhaps refer to some obscure part of the world, or other events occur at the same time with those they record which weigh so heavy in the balance of human progress, that things in themselves deeply interesting are scarcely known beyond the locality where they occur.—Local chronicles frequently contain records of actions which, had they simply taken place on a larger scale, would have excited the universal attention of mankind. Rienzi had Rome for his theatre; Masaniello, Naples; hence they live on the perpetual tablets of world-memory. Another hero, another thinker, whose actions excited the wonder, admiration, and love of his fellow-countrymen, and who performed a real prodigy in a time of remarkable men, is now forgotten, his name doubtful, and his acts buried in the archives of his native land, or mentioned in the reports of an antiquarian society.

Somewhere about the sixth century, there was built in Gaul a city called Aleth; or rather we first hear of it at that date. It was on the seashore, and well fortified. Near at hand was a rocky island, known as Aaron's Isle, for there a holy man, Aaron by name, built a monastery and a church. The dwellers in Aleth paid no attention for some time to this island, because it wanted water; but by and by the Norman pirates came and twice pillaged their city, making of the island their place of shelter; upon this, in 1140, the inhabitants removed to the island, and built a city upon it, which they fortified, and called St. Malo, after a bishop of that name, much venerated by them. An indomitable and energetic race, a nest of sailors, adventurers, merchants, corsairs, the Malouines were known in the days of the Crusaders as the light troops of the sea. From the time of Clovis, the kings of France and the dukes of Brittany struggled for possession of the city, but always in vain. It continued to maintain its independence, supporting the prince which pleased the people best. They were governed by a bishop elected by popular vote; he was called Lord of St. Malo. But although he and the chapter had much power, the citizens made the laws and elected all officers; they had the duty of guarding the town, and chose their own chiefs. All foreigners who came to reside there were obliged to become citizens, and no king or prince had ever a fugitive given up to him. Even the Pope recognized the independence of the Malouines, and took care to be respectful in all his briefs, less they might haughtily deny his authority. At one time entering into an alliance with Jean de Montfort, they narrowly escaped falling into English hands; and, being in difficulties, they gave themselves to the Pope, who handed them over to the king; but this remained not long. The Malouines fell under the gentle rule of the Duke of Brittany, and remained so for some time; but presently, when Anne of Brittany married Charles VIII., their ten centuries of independence ended. The Dutchess Anne obtained possession of the place, and took all power out of the hands of the maritime republic, making the bishop, chapter, and comunality bow to her. She built a formidable citadel, and when the people murmured, ordered an inscription to be stuck up, which at once demonstrated her insolence and the subjection of the people—

QUIC-EN-GROGNE
AINSY SERA
C'EST MON PLAISIR.

GROWL AS YOU MAY
SO IT SHALL BE
SUCH IS MY PLEASURE.

The people afterwards effaced this inscription but the tower to the present day is called familiarly the Tower of Quic-en-Grogne.

Sullen and discontented, the Malouines never even appeared to notice the presence of Louis XII or Francis I., in their city; and when the wars of religion commenced, contrived to side neither with king nor league, although in heart stubborn Catholics. The Count de Fontaines held the castle of Anne of Brittany for the king, the Duke de Mercœur had possession of the great fort on the mainland, called Solidor. By the exercise of a little cunning and gentle violence the citizens obtained the exclusive guard of the citadel—and in the same way took possession of Solidor. The count and duke, when they beheld the citizens resume their old trading habits unfettered and untaxed, saw that they had been out-general-ed; and in 1590 it was rumored that Henry IV., having come to the throne had given orders for St. Malo to be assimilated to other French towns, deprived of its privileges and liberties, and forced to pay regular taxes. This rumor caused a state of extreme and angry excitement.

CHAPTER II.

St. Malo has but little changed since the days of which we speak; it is almost as peculiar and fresh as it was then. It is a vast rock, on which some ten thousand men, women and children cluster like bees in a hive. Its towers, its cathedral, its lofty houses, and its magnificent ramparts of hewn granite, rise perpendicularly from the sea; on one side, the ocean; on the other, a narrow channel, separating it from verdant meadows, green-bosomed hills, mounds surmounted by windmills, woods, valleys, and scattered habitations, a town—St. Servan—and the advance guard of the Rance river, the dark towers of Solidor.

The town of St. Malo is composed of narrow and sombre streets, with here and there a little lively open place, with a fountain or a tree in the centre, surrounded by very striking mansions.—From the ramparts the view is magnificent; while, looking down from the towers of the citadel, you behold, a hundred feet below, the sea breaking against the heavy rocks which form the foundation of the castle. This fortress seemed to overshadow the free city as with a cloud; and few passed the huge tower of Quic-en-Grogne without murmuring, and without cursing the folly that ever induced them to allow an enemy thus to fix himself in a position by which he was able to intimidate and command the citizens.

"Those were good old times," said a gray-haired citizen one evening, who surrounded by a group of friends, sat on the ramparts immediately beneath the citadel, "when our commonalty made the laws, appointed all officers, and when, under Josselin de Rohan, the good bishop, we beat off unaided, except by the blessed Virgin, the Duke of Lancaster and an English fleet."

"Ay! those were days, Porcon de lar Barbinais," replied a man somewhat younger than himself, glancing uneasily at the ramparts of the castle, where two or three sentinels walked up and down, while in a corner stood a lady, richly dressed, in conversation with a young man in the garb of a Malouine. "But mind, what you say. You walls have long ears, and there are those on the ramparts whom I would not have heard our discourse."

"Ah! sorrow and shame," replied the ex-corsair Porcon de la Barbinais, father of the heroic leader who, years later, attacked the Algerines, and, taken prisoner, was sent away to treat, and failing to bring about an arrangement, returned to die—"Ah! sorrow and shame, to think that so gallant and sedate a youth should allow himself to be led away by love and ambition, to abandon his country and serve the enemy of his native city!"

"Excuse me, Father Porcon," modestly observed a youth of about twenty, a young sailor, wearing the picturesque naval costume of the day:—"At all events, Henry the Fourth is king of France."

"And what has France to do with us?" replied Porcon sharply. "When did St. Malo recognize either Brittany or Gaul? By what right does any power or potentate come and impose his sovereignty over us? Did we not found St. Malo on a barren rock?—did we not build, and fortify, and defend ourselves always without king or prince's aid!—have we not fitted out fleets for all parts of the world ourselves?—and why comes any power to ask us for taxes, imposts, or royal dues?"

"Because," said the youth, whose name was Pepin de la Blinai, a name in local history most revered, "we are weak, and the king of France

is strong. But again, allow me, Father Porcon, to observe that Michel Fortet de la Bardeliere has as yet not deserved the universal blame which has fallen on him."

"Has he not?" replied Porcon, bitterly. "Was he not, after two or three years of travel and voyage with our best captains, destined by his father for the robe?—did he not take to learning with enthusiasm?—and has he not deserted all to live in the society of our enemies, whispering soft nonsense in the ears of Isabella de Fontaines—to be one day driven shamefully away for daring to raise his eyes to one so far his superior?"

"He has," said Pepin with a sigh, while all the crowd gave vent to a low murmur of indignation, casting their eyes upward with menace and anger.

"And are we not promised that our city shall fall into the hands of the Bearnais, have its every privilege destroyed, and its inhabitants crushed by heavy imposts, by the hands of this Count de Fontaines, who will perhaps give us Michel as echevin, or bishop, or seneschal?"

"He would not dare," said an old man, rising from the seat he occupied—"he would not dare!"

"Why not?" asked a voice near at hand, that made all start and shudder; and yet it was a rich and musical voice, too. It was Michel Fortet de la Bardeliere. He had parted with the lady on the ramparts, and, descending quietly, had approached the group of talkers unperceived, and heard the last two sentences. He was a young man of about five-and-twenty, dark, pale, thoughtful; with great lustrous eyes, and a mouth rather hard in expression, as if it were accustomed, or destined to command. He wore loose breeches, black stockings, shoes with buckles, a jacket, showing a shirt of lace and fine linen, a broad brimmed hat, and a sword.

"Michel—Michel!" said old Porcon gravely, "as you know our opinions of you, let me speak, and try to lead you the right way."

"Speak!" said he gravely.

"You are the friend and companion of the Count de Fontaines, our enemy," began Porcon.

"I am but his hired servant—his secretary, if you will," said Michael coldly.

"You love his daughter," continued Porcon.

"I love his daughter," replied Michel, folding his arms.

"You aspire to be the ruler and governor of your native city," said Porcon with flashing eyes, while the others looked as if they could have cast Michel from the summit of the battlements.

"I do. And mark me, good Master Porcon," continued Michel coldly, "I will be, despite your efforts, ere many days perhaps, ruler and governor of my native city." And without a single word more, the young man turned away and walked along the ramparts in the direction of the Silon.—It was difficult to tell whether his mouth gave token more of scorn or stern resolution.

The group, burning with indignation, descended to the principal place of the city, and there, joined by others, vented their anger in murmurs. So enraged at length became the citizens, that there was a very great crowd collected. Voices were heard giving extreme counsels; threats were freely bandied about; and men spoke of attacking the castle with as much earnestness, as if it had not been all but impregnable. Suddenly a loud hush caused silence, as a party of six horse men, headed by Michel walking on foot, came up to the open place in the centre of which stood the episcopal palace, now inhabited by Charles de Bourneuf, a notorious Leaguer in his heart, and for this reason as much suspected by the people as was the king's officer who held the castle.—The troop was headed by a captain of noble mien, somewhat bluff, and even then rather stern, who looked about him curiously.

"Your good people of St. Malo are but sorrowfully pleased at some event," observed the horseman to Michel, who walked proudly beside the soldier.

"Sir Captain, it is my unworthy self they are exciting themselves about. In favor at the castle, I cannot be in favor in the city."

"So young man, you are in favor at the castle," said the captain with a smile.

"I am private secretary to Count de Fontaines," replied Michel carelessly.

"But why should your favor in the city be in inverse ratio to what it is at the fortress?" asked the soldier, who was pressing his horse slowly and gently through the crowd.

"Because, Sir Captain, the fortress without any just reason or excuse, is accused of wishing to make St. Malo a king's city."

"And, Ventre St. Gris!" cried the soldier, "where would be the harm of that?"

"St. Malo," said Michel sarcastically, "was once a free city, ruling itself after the fashion of Greek or Roman republic; its own master, free

owing no allegiance to king or prince, and it wishes to be the same now."

"No, no! Master Secretary," replied the soldier merrily, "this will never do. A republic in the kingdom of France!—a pretty example for the disaffected. Why, all the strong places would be declaring themselves republics, refusing to pay imposts, and leaving the poor king to earn his bread like a farmer or manant."

"Very likely," said Michel dryly, but speaking so low as only to be heard by his companion.

"No, no! when all France was cut up into provinces, this was possible, Master Secretary, but of many good parts we are making now a noble whole; and let but interior peace come, and we shall have a great, a splendid country, powerful by sea and land; and the king cannot even spare St. Malo."

This last speech was heard by the citizens, who, though they said nothing, showed by their looks their bitter discontent. When Michel and the soldiers passed up the street leading to the fort, the groups formed again. A few minutes later, a man came hurriedly forth from the episcopal palace. It was the bishop himself.

"Porcon," said he to the old man above mentioned, "do you know that captain who was with Michel the traitor?"

"No, your reverence."

"It was the Bearnais, the king of Navarre falsely calling himself Henry the Fourth, king of France." And the bishop returned to his palace without another word. He had said quite enough. A low murmur of surprise, of admiration at the courage of the king, and then an explosion of indignation burst forth.

"The moment for action is come," said Pepin significantly to some friends around him. The word passed, and silence overspread the whole place. In five minutes more the crowd had dispersed, each man to his own dwelling.

CHAPTER III.

It was Henry IV., indeed, who, not yet firmly seated on his throne, was making a journey through his province of Brittany, to judge for himself of the public mind towards the king. Aware that St. Malo was by no means well affected towards his person and dignity, because of his former Protestantism, his doubtful conversion, and his intention to centralize government, he determined to enter the castle, consult M. de Fontaines, and judge for himself as to the spirit of the inhabitants. By the time he had reached the castle, he was still more firmly convinced that in his dear city of St. Malo, as he was pleased to call it, he was far from being popular; while he was too good a general and had too observant an eye, not to be aware of the paramount importance of possessing a place so strongly fortified, and having so hardy a population. He scrutinized with a soldier's glance the ramparts of the castle, and vowed within himself that he would not rest in peace until he ruled over that quaint old city. "By the faith of a soldier," said he energetically, as he entered the chateau, "Monsieur de Fontaines has done well to bid the king fix his eye on St. Malo. It is a good place, Master Secretary, and a goodly jewel in a king's crown."

"Sire," replied Michel respectfully, "it may suit your majesty, but your majesty does not seem to suit it."

"Truth to say," laughed Henry, "you say right. I verily believe the good fishermen would eat me if they but knew who I am. However, since you know me, young master, you must also know that I did not suit France, and yet I am its king."

"We all in St. Malo know the wonders you have effected," exclaimed Michel; "but here is the governor coming to meet your majesty."

As the visit of the king to St. Malo was intended to be kept secret, the Count de Fontaines received him merely as an officer of rank, and accompanied him to a well-supplied table, where he was soon joined by his daughter Isabella and Master Secretary. The girl at once attracted the king's attention. She was about sixteen, fair-haired, with waving curls, a white forehead, intelligent eyes, and a sweet expression of countenance, especially when looking at Michel. This circumstance made Henry IV. frown, being apt to think that when such a cavalier as himself was present, no woman of taste should look at another. But he did not allow this thought to draw his attention from the object of his journey.

"So, my Lord Count," said he, after some preliminary discourse, "you think it will be easy to capture the city, and put in a royal garrison?"

"Nothing more easy, sire," replied he, none now being at table but himself, the king, and the two young people: "give me but the word and the town shall be ours to-night."