

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydow
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Schlegel
Weber Freiligrath Friedrich II. von Preußen
Kant Ernst Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Hölderlin Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliot Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Zweig Vergil
Goethe Ewald Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Rathenau Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Verne von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauptmann Gautier
Garschin Defoe Baudelaire
Damaschke Descartes Hebbel
Wolfram von Eschenbach Dickens Schopenhauer Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Bronner Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke George
Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Bebel Proust
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Herodot
Storm Casanova Tersteegen Grillparzer Georgy
Chamberlain Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Brentano Claudius Schiller Lafontaine Kralik Iffland Sokrates
Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpis
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Höltz Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Machiavelli Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Marx Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelnatz
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**Le Morvan, [A District of France,]
Its Wild Sports, Vineyards and
Forests with Legends, Antiquities,
Rural and Local Sketches**

Henri de Crignelle

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PREFACE.

Born in one of the most beautiful provinces of France, in a country of noble forests and extensive vineyards; brought up in the open air amidst the blue hills, and ever wandering over the fields and mountains with a gun on my arm—all the hours of my youth, if I may so say, were spent in search of partridges and hares in the dewy stubbles, and in the pursuit of the wild cat and the boar in the shady depths of the woods.

When relating the adventures of these different shooting rambles to a friend, talking over with him our mode of sporting so different from that of England, and when in imagination I carried him along with me into the dells and dark ravines, and described to him the chase and death-struggle of the ferocious wolf, or the odd characters and antediluvian customs of the primitive people amongst whom I passed the days of my happy boyhood, astonished, he could hardly believe that such sports and such singular personages existed within so short a distance of his own country.

"Why not scribble all this?" he would say, "your sketches would make capital light reading."

"But to write is not easy; and, besides, what a poor figure I and my dogs and wolves, woodcocks and vineyards, would cut after the terrible Mr. Gordon Cumming. How could any description of mine interest the public in comparison with those of that famous shot and his three coffee-coloured Hottentots, with his bands of panthers and giraffes, his troops of yellow lions dancing sarabands round the fountains, and his jungles and swamps swarming with elephants and hippopotami?"

"But we might be able to go to Le Morvan," said my friend, "whereas few indeed, if they wished it, can go to the South of Africa to shoot elephants through the small ribs; neither is it probable that many of us would like to pass several years of their valuable lives shut up in a loose, rolling, sea-bathing-machine-like wagon, with their own beloved shadow alone for all Christian company. Let us have a narrative of your exploits?"

"You do not consider what you ask," I replied; "my gossip may have amused you, but the effusions of my pen would to a certainty make you yawn like graves."

"Nonsense," whispered the flatterer, "you will open to us a new country, you will confer a real service upon hundreds of restless Englishmen, who when summer comes know not for the life of them where to go, or where not to go;—write your work, and advise them to turn their steps to Le Morvan at the time of the vintage."

But now another, a huge difficulty, sprung up. Printers do not lend their types for nothing any more than they give gratis their time and paper. To publish a book is always an expensive affair; misfortune, which had touched me with its wing, which has been the sad guest of my house, deprived me of the power of undertaking it myself: and where to find a person so generous as to take upon himself the responsibility of the undertaking? Happily I was in England, in the land of kind hearts and warm sympathies. A noble lady, the mother of a distinguished English nobleman, who passes her life in doing good, took an interest in my forlorn history, and was pleased to honour me with her patronage. With this mantle of protection thrown around me, and my generous friend having undertaken to bear the responsibilities of publishing, the difficulties were soon swept away, and *Le Morvan* was written.

I had hoped that I should in this Preface be permitted to mention her name, which would have been less a compliment to her than an honour to me; but her modesty has refused this public acknowledgment of my unbounded gratitude,—a veil of respectful reserve shall therefore remain suspended over her name. As for me and mine, we shall treasure it in our thankful hearts—every day shall we pray that the Great Giver of all good may confer upon her His most precious and gracious blessings.

HENRI DE CRIGNELLE.

London, *August*, 1851.

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LE MORVAN.

CHAPTER I.

English propensity to ramble—Where and how—Le Morvan—Vezelay—Description of the town—Historical associations connected with it—Charles IX.—Persecutions of the Protestants—View from Vezelay—Scenery and wild sports—The Author—Object of the Work.

Every nation has its characteristics, and amongst those which are peculiar to the genius of the English people, is their ardent and insatiable love of wandering.

To locomote is absolutely necessary to every Englishman; in his heart is profoundly rooted a passion for long journeys; each and all of them, old and young, healthy and sickly, would if they could take not merely the grand tour, but circulate round the two hemispheres with all the pleasure imaginable. At a certain period of the year, when the weathercock points the right way, the sun burns [Pg 2] in the sign of the Lion, and the husbandman bends his weary form to gather in the golden corn, the legs of the rich Englishman begin to be nervously agitated, he feels a sense of suffocation, and pants for change—of air, of place, of everything; he girds up his loins, and without throwing a glance behind him, it is Hey, Presto! begone! and he is off. Where?

It is autumn, blessed autumn, the season of harvest and sunny days; the English are everywhere—they fly from their own dear island like clouds of chilly swallows, light upon Europe as thick as thrushes in an orchard, and are soon mingled with every nation of the earth, like the blue corn flowers in the ripe barley fields. Yes, from north to south, from east to west, go where you will, you cannot proceed ten miles without meeting a smiling rosy English girl coquettishly concealed under her large green veil, and a grave British gentleman, whistling to the wide world in the sheer enjoyment of having nothing to do but to look at it.

I have seen green veils climbing the Pyramids; I have seen green veils diving down into the dark mines of the Oural; I have seen an English gentleman perched like a chamois on the top of St. Bernard,

hat in hand, roaring "God save the Queen." I have [Pg 3] seen some sipping Syracusan wine, puffing a comfortable cloud from obese cigars, most irreverently seated in the big nose of St. Carlo Borromeo. One-half of England is gone to China, the other half to Africa; these will speak to you of Kamschatka, those of the mountains of the Moon, just as a London cockney or a Parisian *badaud* would speak to you of Greenwich or of Bagnolet. Some have boxed with the bears of the Pyrenees; others have killed lions and tigers by dozens; one has crossed the Nile on a crocodile, another vows he waltzed with a dying hippopotamus, and several have bagged camelopards and elephants by scores. In short, they have trodden with a bold disdainful step all the high-roads and by-roads of our wondrous planet, displaying, in every quarter of the compass, the daring and devil-may-care spirit of their youth and the spleen of their mature age, as well as the yellow guineas from their long and well-filled purses.

Well, then, ask of all this wandering tribe, who boast of having been everywhere, and seen everything; ask those travelling birds who have flown through France and Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Palestine; who have sledged in Russia and fished in Norway; who have lost themselves in the prairies of the [Pg 4] far West, or in the Pampas, the gorges of the Andes, or the Alleghanies; who have bronzed their epidermis in the fierce heat of the tropics, or moistened their fair *chevelure* in the diamond spray of Niagara; who have, in fine, journeyed through calm and hurricane, snow-storms, sirocco, and simoom; who have rubbed noses—male noses—of the tattooed savage; mounted donkeys, ostriches, camelopards, lamas, and dromedaries; mules, wild asses, negroes, and elephants; ask them all if once in their lives—one single once—they have seen or even heard of Le Morvan?

Not one of these thousands will answer yes. Le Morvan, where is it? what is Le Morvan? Is it a mountain, a church, a river, a star, a flower, a bird? Le Morvan, who knows anything about Le Morvan? Echo answers, "Who knows?" Paddy Blake's replies, "Nobody." And yet all of you roving English, who delight in athletic sports and rural scenes—the forest glade and murmuring streams, a view halloo and the gallant hound; who love the bleak and healthy moors,

the cool retreats, the flowery paths, and mountain solitudes, how happy would you be in Le Morvan. Where, then, is Le Morvan?

Le Morvan is a district of France, in which are included portions of the departments of the Nièvre [Pg 5] and the Yonne, having on the west the vineyards of Burgundy, and on the east the mountains of the Nivernois. Its ancient and picturesque capital, Vezelay, crowns a hill 2,000 feet in height, and commands a panoramic view of the country for thirty miles round. It has all the characteristics of a town of the feudal times, with high embattled and loopholed walls, numerous towers, and deep and strong gateways, under which are still to be seen the grooves of the portcullis, the warder's guard-room, and the hooks that supported the heavy drawbridge.

The capital of Le Morvan partially owed its rise to a celebrated nunnery, founded by Gerard de Roussillon, a great hero of romance and chivalry, who lived, loved, and fought under Pepin, the father of the grand Charlemagne. This nunnery, which was sacked and burnt to the ground by the Saracens, those terrible warriors of the East, was restored in the ninth century, and fortified; and as the sainted inmates were believed to have amongst their relics a tress of the golden hair of the beautiful and repentant Magdalen, troops of the faithful—and people were ready to believe a great deal in those days—flocked to Vezelay, when it soon became a large and flourishing town.

In the tenth century, when the people, in their [Pg 6] endeavour to shake off a few links of their fetters, refused to bend their bodies in the dust before their lords and their minds before their priests—when the seeds of liberty, till then lying in unprofitable ground, though watered for centuries by the tears of tyranny and oppression, first germinated and rose above the earth, who gave the signal of resistance in France?—the inhabitants of Vezelay. Yes; it is to her citizens that the honour belongs of having first refused to submit to the power, the domineering power, of political and ecclesiastical rule; it was her brave inhabitants who, assembling in secret, thought not of the peril, but, having promised help and protection one to the other, flew to arms. A short and desperate struggle ensued, but the victory remained in the hands of the abbot of Vezelay. Hundreds of brave men were put, without mercy, to the sword, and many, with

less mercy, burnt alive or died by the torture in the dark dungeons of the abbatical palace. Vezelay still preserves in its archives the names of twelve of these martyrs.

Again in the twelfth century, when the cry to the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre shook all Europe, and every nation poured forth her tens of thousands to drive the infidel from that land in which their Redeemer [Pg 7] had lived and died an ignominious and cruel death, it was at Vezelay that Pope Eugenius III. assembled a great council of the princes of the church, the great barons, and chivalry of those times. It was in her immense cathedral, one of the oldest and largest in the kingdom, amidst the clang of arms, war cries, and religious chaunts, and in the presence of Louis le Jeune, King of France, that St. Bernard preached, in 1146, the Second Crusade.

Vezelay is celebrated as having been the birth-place of Beza, the great Protestant Reformer (1519), who succeeded not only to the place but to the influence of Calvin, and was, after that eminent man's death, regarded as the head and leader of the Genevese church.

It was to Vezelay, the only town that dared to offer them the protection of its walls, that the unfortunate Protestants fled after the horrible massacre of St. Bartholomew's—the base political cruelty of the brutal homicide, Charles IX. Tracked and hunted down like wild beasts, and a price set upon their heads, they found staunch and noble hearts in the inhabitants of Vezelay; but, ere long, an army of their insatiable foes arrived and besieged the town, and treachery at a postern one stormy night made them masters of it, [Pg 8] when scenes of horror followed under the mask of religion that even at this distance of time make one recoil with terror and disgust at the dogmas of the corrupt faith which dictated them.

Roasting men alive, and boiling women, dashing out the brains of many a cherub boy and prattling girl, was the pleasing and satisfactory pastime with which Pope Gregory, Catherine de Medicis, and her congenial son gladdened their Christian hearts. The blood of their victims still cries to us from the ground of their Golgotha; for on the south side of the town there is a large green field, called *Le Champ des Huguenots*. The damning fact, from which this spot re-

ceived its name, has been handed down to us by the historian. It is as follows:

The Catholics, having instituted a strict search in the woods and caverns of the environs, made so many prisoners that they were puzzled what to do with them—nay, in what manner they should take their lives. Among many ingenious experiments, it was suggested that they should bury them alive up to their necks in the field to which we have alluded; and this was accordingly done with nine of them, whose heads were bowled at with cannon-balls taken from the adjoining rampart, as if they had been blocks [Pg 9] of wood instead of live human heads. The shrieks of the miserable beings excited no compassion; on the contrary, it afforded amusement to their executioners: so that games of skittles upon the same principle were played the whole length of this meadow.

Turning aside from these execrable deeds of man to the works of Nature and of Nature's God, which have always been and always must be lovely and worthy of our deepest admiration, let us dwell for a moment upon the splendid view from the castle-terrace, which forms the principal promenade of Vezelay. Shaded by large and venerable trees, through the lofty branches of which many a storm has howled for nearly four hundred years, the sight from hence is one of the finest panoramic views in France.

All around, whether on the slope of the hills by the river-side, in the middle distance, or near the mountains which form the horizon, are seen hundreds of little villages, and many a white villa scattered among the green vines as daisies on the turf. To the left and right are St. Père and Akin, two hamlets, which seem like faithful dogs sleeping at the foot of the mountain crowned by Vezelay. The province in which this cloud-capped fortress-town is situated is a retired spot out of the beaten track of the tourist, [Pg 10] the man of business, or the man of pleasure—lost, as it were, in the very heart of beautiful France, like a wild strawberry in the depth of the forest—encircled by woods, and unknown to the foreigner, who, in his rapid journey to Geneva or to Lyons, almost elbows it without dreaming of its existence.

Le Morvan rears in its sylvan depths a population of hardy and honest men and lovely women, fresh as roses, and gay as butter-

flies. There the soft evening breezes are charged with the songs of ten thousand birds, the odours of the eglantine, the lily of the valley, and the violet, which, shaking off its winter slumbers, opens its dark blue eye and combines its perfume with that of its snowy companion.

Le Morvan is a country that would delight an Englishman, for it is full of game; here the sportsman may vary his pleasures as fancy dictates. The forest abounds with deer; the plain with rabbits and the timid hare; and in the vineyards, during the merry season of the vintage, the fat red-stockinged and gray-clad partridges are bagged by bushels. Here the sportsman may watch in the open glades the treacherous wild cat and the bounding roebuck; and, should these sports appear too tame, he may, if foot and heart are sound, plunge into the dark recesses of [Pg 11] the forest in pursuit of the savage and grisly boar, or the fierce and prowling wolf.

When evening comes, bringing with it peace and rest to the industrious peasant, when the moon shall light her bright lamp in the star-spangled heavens, and shed her silvery rays across the plain, the hunter may lead forth the village belle, and foot it merrily on the mossy greensward, to the sound of the bagpipe and the rustic flute, by fountains which never cease their monotonous but soothing plaint, and under the long shadows of the ancient oaks and tall acacias.

Happiness, says Solomon, consists not in the possession of that gold for which men toil so unremittingly and grave deep wrinkles on the heart and brow. Happiness lights not her torch at the crystal lustres in the halls of royalty; she rarely chooses for her home the marble palaces of the wealthy, nor is she often the companion of the great, robed in costly apparel; rarely does she braid her hair with pearls, or wear the rosy lightning of the ruby on her fair bosom.

Happiness is known only to him who, free and contented, lives unknown in his little corner, deaf to the turmoil and insensible to the excitements of the selfish [Pg 12] crowd, and ignorant of the sorrows and sufferings of great cities. She is found in the enjoyment of the sunshine and the open air, in the shady groves and flowery fields, by the side of the murmuring brooks, and in the society of the gay, frank, and simple-minded peasant of my own dear country.

Oh! my white and pretty *pavillon*, whose walls are clad with fragrant creepers and the luscious vine, whose porch is scented with the woodbine and the rose—oh! lovely valleys, dark forests, deep blue lakes which sleep unruffled in the bosom of the hills, beautiful vine-clad hills, where in the morning of my youth I chased those flying flowers, the bright and painted butterflies—oh! when, when shall I see you all again—like the bird of passage, which, when the winter is over, returns to his sunny home? When shall I see thee again? Oh! my sweet Le Morvan! Oh! my native land! Happy, thrice happy they who cherish in their hearts the love of nature, who prefer her sublime and incomparable beauties to the false and artificial works of man, accumulated with so much cost and care within the walls of her great cities. Happy, too, are those who have not been carried away by the fatal flood of misfortune from the paternal hearth, who have always lived in sight of that home which sheltered [Pg 13] their merry childhood, and whose lives, pure and peaceful as the noiseless stream of the valley, close in calmness and serenity like the twilight of a bright summer's day.

[Pg 14]

CHAPTER II.

Le Morvan—Forests—Climate—Patriarchs and Damosels—Peasants of the plain and the mountaineer—Jovial Curés—Their love of Burgundy—The Doctor and the Curé.

Le Morvan, anciently Morvennum, or Pagus Morvinus, as Cæsar calls it in his Commentaries, comprises, as we have before remarked, a portion of the departments of the Nièvre and the Yonne, lying between vine-clad Burgundy and the mountains of the Nivernois. Its productions are various; in the plains are grown wheat, rye, hemp, oats, and flax: on the mountain side the grape is largely cultivated; and in the valleys are rich verdant meadows, where countless droves of oxen, knee-deep in the luxuriant grass, feed and fatten in peace and abundance.

But the real and inexhaustible wealth of Le Morvan is in its forests. In these several thousand trees are felled annually, sawn into logs, branded and thrown by cart-loads into the neighbouring torrent, which, on reaching a more tranquil stream, are lashed into rafts, when they drift onwards to the Seine, and are eventually borne on the waters of that river to the capital. The [Pg 15] forests of the Nièvre are some of the most extensive in France; thick and dark, and formed of ancient oaks, maple, and spreading beech, they cover nearly 200,000 acres of ground. Those of the Yonne are larger but of a character far less wild.

The climate of this part of France is delightful; with the exception of occasional showers, very little rain falls; the sky is serene, and scarcely ever is a vagabond cloud seen in the ethereal blue to throw a shadow upon the lovely landscape beneath. For six months of the year the sun is daily refulgent in the heavens, and sets evening after evening in all his glorious majesty. But in the woods it is not thus; the storms there are sometimes terrible, and, like those of the tropics, arise and terminate with wonderful rapidity. These tempests, which purify the atmosphere, leave behind them a delicious coolness, the trees and shrubs, as they shake from their trembling leaves their sparkling tears, appear so bright—the flowers which raise again their drooping heads, load the air with such delightful odours—the whole forest, in short, seems so refreshed and full of