

In Search of Hyperboreans

Penguin island

Anatole France

translated by A. W. Evans

1908

*I*N spite of the apparent diversity of the amusements that seem to attract me, my life has but one object. It is wholly bent upon the accomplishment of one great scheme. I am writing the history of the Penguins. I labor sedulously at this task without allowing myself to be repelled by its frequent difficulties although at times these seem insuperable.

I have delved into the ground in order to discover the buried remains of that people. Men's first books were stones, and I have studied the stones that can be regarded as the primitive annals of the Penguins. On the shore of the ocean I have ransacked a previously untouched tumulus, and in it I found, as usually happens, flint axes, bronze swords, Roman coins, and a twenty-sou piece bearing the effigy of Louis-Philippe I., King of the French.

For historical times, the chronicle of Johannes Talpa, a monk of the monastery of Bear-garden, has been of great assistance to me. I steeped myself the more thoroughly in this author as no other source for the Penguin history of the Early Middle Ages has yet been discovered.

We are richer for the period that begins with the thirteenth century, richer but not better off. It is extremely difficult to write history. We do not know exactly how things have happened, and the historian's embarrassment increases with the abundance of documents at his disposal. When a fact is known through the evidence of a single person, it is admitted without much hesitation. Our perplexities begin when events are related by two or by several witnesses, for their evidence is always contradictory and always irreconcilable.

It is true that the scientific reasons for preferring one piece of evidence to another are sometimes very strong, but they are never strong enough to outweigh our passions, our prejudices, our interests, or to overcome that levity of mind common to all grave men. It follows that we continually present the facts in a prejudiced or frivolous manner.

I have confided the difficulties that I experienced in writing the history of the Penguins to several learned archaeologists and paleographers both of my own and foreign countries. I endured their contempt. They looked at me with a pitying smile which seemed to say : " Do we write history ? Do you imagine that we attempt to extract the least parcel of life or truth from a text or a document ? We publish texts purely and simply. We keep to their exact letter. The letter alone is definite and perceptible. It is not so with the spirit ; ideas are crotchets. A man must be very vain to write history, for to do so requires imagination."

All this was in the glances and smiles of our masters in paleography, and their behavior discouraged me deeply. One day after a conversation with an eminent sigillographer, I was even more depressed than usual, when I suddenly thought :

" After all, there are historians ; the race has not entirely disappeared. Some five or six of them have been preserved at the Academy of Moral Sciences. They do not publish texts ; they

write history. They will not tell me that one must be a vain fellow to take up that sort of work.”

This idea restored my courage.

The following day I called upon one of them, an astute old man.

“ I came, sir,” said I to him, “ to ask for the advice that a man of your experience can give. I am taking the utmost trouble in composing a history and I reach no result whatever.”

He answered me, shrugging his shoulders :

“ What is the good, my dear sir, of giving yourself so much trouble, and why compose a history when all you need do is to copy the best-known ones in the usual way ? If you have a fresh view or an original idea, if you present men and things from an unexpected point of view, you will surprise the reader. And the reader does not like being surprised. He never looks in a history for anything but the stupidities that he knows already. If you try to instruct him you only humiliate him and make him angry. Do not try to enlighten him ; he will only cry out that you insult his beliefs.

“ Historians copy from one another. Thus they spare themselves trouble and avoid the appearance of presumption. Imitate them and do not be original. An original historian is the object of distrust, contempt, and loathing from everybody.

“ Do you imagine, sir,” added he, “ that I should be respected and honored as I am if I had put innovations into my historical works ? And what are innovations ? They are impertinences.”

He rose. I thanked him for his kindness and reached the door. He called me back.

“ One word more. If you want your book to be well received, lose no opportunity for exalting the virtues on which society is based attachment to wealth, pious sentiments, and especially resignation on the part of the poor, which latter is the very foundation of order. Proclaim, sir, that the origins of property—nobility and police—are treated in your history with all the respect which these institutions deserve. Make it known that you admit the supernatural when it presents itself. On these conditions you will succeed in good society.”

I have given much thought to these judicious observations and I have given them the fullest weight.

I have not here to deal with the Penguins before their metamorphosis. They begin to come within my scope only at the moment when they leave the realm of zoology to enter those of history and theology. It was in truth Penguins that the great St. Mael changed into men, though it is necessary to explain this, for today the term might give rise to confusion.

We call by the name of Penguin in French, a bird of the Arctic regions belonging to the family of the Alcides ; we call the type of the spheniscides inhabiting the Antarctic seas, manchots. Thus M.G. Leconte, for example, says in his narrative of the voyage of the Belgica : [1] “ Of all birds that people the Strait of Gerlache, the manchots are certainly the most interesting. They are sometimes designated, though inaccurately, under the name of the penguins of the South.” Doctor J.B. Charcot affirms, [2] on the contrary, that the true and only

Penguins are those Antarctic birds which we call manchots, and he gives for reason that they received from the Dutch, who in 1598 reached Cape Magellan, the name of pinguinos, doubtless because of their fat. But if the manchots are called penguins what are we in future to call the Penguins themselves ? Dr. J.B. Charcot does not tell us, and he does not seem to have given the matter a moment's attention.

Well, that his manchots become or re-become Penguins is a matter to which we must consent. He has acquired the right to name them by discovering them. But let him at least allow the Northern penguins to remain penguins. There will be the penguins of the South and those of the North, the Antarctic and the Arctic, the alcides or old penguins, and the spheniscides or former manchots. This will perhaps cause embarrassment to ornithologists who are careful in describing and classing the palmipedes ; they will doubtless ask if a single name is really suited to two families who are poles apart from one another and who differ in several respects, particularly in their beaks, winglets, and claws. For my part, I adapt myself easily to this confusion. Whatever be the differences between my penguins and those of M. J.B. Charcot, the resemblances are more numerous and more deep-seated. The former, like the latter, attract notice by their grave and placid air, their comic dignity, their trustful familiarity, their sly simplicity, their habits at once awkward and solemn. Both are pacific, abounding in speech, eager to see anything novel, immersed in public affairs, and perhaps a little jealous of all that is superior to them.

My hyperboreans have, it is true, winglets that are not scaly, but covered with little feathers, and, although their legs are fixed a little farther back than those of the Southerns, they walk in the same way with their chests lifted up and their heads held aloft, balancing their bodies in a like dignified style, and their sublime beak (so sublime) is not the least cause of the error into which the apostle fell when he took them for men.

The present work, I cannot but recognize, belongs to the old order of history, to that which presents the sequence of events whose memory has been preserved, to the order which indicates, as far as possible, causes and effects. It is an art rather than a science. It is claimed that this method no longer satisfies exact minds, and that the ancient Clio is today looked upon as a teller of old wives' fables. And possibly we shall have in the future a more trustworthy history, a history of the conditions of life, which will teach us what a given people at a given epoch produced and consumed in every department of its activity. History of that type will be no longer an art but a science, and it will assume the exactness which the former history lacked. But in order that it may come into existence, it has need of a multitude of statistics which is hitherto wanting among all peoples and particularly among the Penguins. It is possible that modern nations may one day provide the elements of such a history. As regards what is already past we must always content ourselves, I fear, with a narrative in the ancient style. The interest of such a narrative depends above all on the perspicacity and good faith of the narrator.

As a great writer of Alca has said, the life of a people is a tissue of crime, wretchedness, and folly. Penguinia did not differ in this respect from other nations ; nevertheless, its history contains some admirable sections upon which I hope that I have cast much fresh light.

The Penguins remained warlike for a lengthy period. One of them, Jacquot, the Philosopher, has painted their character in a little moral picture that I reproduce here, and that, doubtless, will not be read without pleasure :

The philosopher, Gratien, traveled through Penguinia in the time of the later Draconides. One day as he passed through a pleasant valley where the cow-bells tinkled in the pure air, he

seated himself on a bench at the foot of an oak, close beside a cottage. At the threshold a woman was nursing her child ; a little boy was playing with a big dog ; a blind old man, seated in the sun with his lips half-opened, drank in the light of day.

The master of the house, a young and sturdy man, offered some bread and milk to Gratien.

The Porpoise philosopher having taken this rural repast :

“ Delightful inhabitants of a delightful country, I give you thanks,” said he. “ Everything here breathes forth joy, concord, and peace.”

As he said this a shepherd passed by playing a march upon his pipe.

“ What is that lively air ?” asked Gratien.

“ It is the war-hymn against the Porpoises,” answered the peasant.

“ Everybody here sings it. Little children know it before they can speak. We are all good Penguins.”

“ You don't like the Porpoises then ?”

“ We hate them.”

“ For what reason do you hate them ?”

“ Need you ask ? Are not the Porpoises neighbors of the Penguins !”

“ Of course.

“ Well, that is why the Penguins hate the Porpoises.”

“ Is that a reason?”

“ Certainly. He who says neighbors says enemies. Look at the field that borders mine. It belongs to the man I hate most in the world. After him my worst enemies are the people of the village on the other slope of the valley at the foot of that birch wood. In this narrow valley formed of two parts there are but that village and mine : they are enemies. Every time that our lads meet the others, insults and blows pass between them. And you want the Penguins not to be enemies of the Porpoises ! Don't you know what patriotism is ? For my part there are but two cries that rise to my lips : ‘ Hurrah for the Penguins ! Death to the Porpoises !’”

During thirteen centuries the Penguins made war upon all the peoples in the world with a constant ardor and diverse fortunes. Then for some years they tired of what they had loved so long and showed a marked preference for peace which they expressed with dignity, indeed, but in the most sincere accents. Their generals adapted themselves very well to this new humor ; all their army, officers, noncommissioned officers, and men, conscripts and veterans, took pleasure in conforming to it. None but scribblers and book-worms complained of the change and the cut-throats alone refused to be consoled on account of it.

This same Jacquot, the Philosopher, composed a sort of moral tale in which he represented in a comic and lively fashion the diverse actions of men, and he mingled in it several

passages from the history of his own country. Some persons asked him why he had written this feigned history and what advantage, according to him, his country would derive from it.

“A very great one,” answered the philosopher. “When they see their actions travestied in this way and lopped of all which flattered them, the Penguins will judge better, and, perhaps, become more reasonable.”

I desired to omit nothing from this history that could interest artists. There is a chapter on Penguin painting in the Middle Ages, and if that chapter is not so complete as I desired the fault is not mine, as you can see from reading the terrible recital with which I end this preface.

The idea occurred to me, in the month of June last year, to go and consult on the origins and progress of Penguin art, the lamented M. Fulgence Tapir, the learned author of the “Universal Annals of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture.”

Having been shown into his study, I found seated before a roll-top desk, beneath a frightful mass of papers, an amazingly short-sighted little man whose eyelids blinked behind his gold-mounted spectacles.

To make up for the defeat of his eyes his long and mobile nose, endowed with an exquisite sense of touch, explored the sensible world. By means of this organ Fulgence Tapir put himself in contact with art and beauty. It is observed that in France, as a general rule, musical critics are deaf and art critics are blind. This allows them the collectedness necessary for aesthetic ideas. Do you imagine that with eyes capable of perceiving the forms and colours with which mysterious nature envelops herself, Fulgence Tapir would have raised himself, on a mountain of printed and manuscript documents, to the summit of doctrinal spiritualism, or that he would have conceived that mighty theory which makes the arts of all times and countries converge towards the Institute of France, their supreme end ?

The walls of the study, the floor, and even the ceiling were loaded with overflowing bundles, pasteboard boxes swollen beyond measure, boxes in which were compressed an innumerable multitude of small cards covered with writing. I beheld in admiration mingled with terror the cataracts of erudition that threatened to burst forth.

“Master,” said I in feeling tones, “I throw myself upon your kindness and your knowledge, both of which are inexhaustible. Would you consent to guide me in my arduous researches into the origins of Penguin art ?”

“Sir,” answered the Master, “I possess all art, you understand me, all art, on cards classed alphabetically and in order of subjects. I consider it my duty to place at your disposal all that relates to the Penguins. Get on that ladder and take out that box you see above. You will find in it everything you require.”

I tremblingly obeyed. But scarcely had I opened the fatal box than some blue cards escaped from it, and slipping through my fingers, began to rain down. Almost immediately, acting in sympathy, the neighboring boxes opened, and there flowed streams of pink, green, and white cards, and by degrees, from all the boxes, differently colored cards were poured out murmur-ing like a waterfall on a mountain-side in April. In a minute they covered the floor with a thick layer of paper. Issuing from their inexhaustible reservoirs with a roar that continually grew in force, each second increased the vehemence of their torrential fall.

Swamped up to the knees in cards, Fulgence Tapir observed the cataclysm with attentive nose. He recognized its cause and grew pale with fright.

“What a mass of art !” he exclaimed.

I called to him and leaned forward to help him mount the ladder which bent under the shower. It was too late. Overwhelmed, desperate, pitiable, his velvet smoking-cap and his gold-mounted spectacles having fallen from him, he vainly opposed his short arms to the flood which had now mounted to his arm-pits. Suddenly a terrible spurt of cards arose and enveloped him in a gigantic whirlpool. During the space of a second I could see in the gulf the shining skull and little fat hands of the scholar ; then it closed up and the deluge kept pouring over what was silence and immobility. In dread lest I in my turn should be swallowed up ladder and all I made my escape through the topmost pane of the window.

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The Beginnings

I.

Life of Saint Mael

MAEL, a scion of a royal family of Cambria, was sent in his ninth year to the Abbey of Yvern so that he might there study both sacred and profane learning. At the age of fourteen he renounced his patrimony and took a vow to serve the Lord. His time was divided, according to the rule, between the singing of hymns, the study of grammar, and the meditation of eternal truths.

A celestial perfume soon disclosed the virtues of the monk throughout the cloister, and when the blessed Gal, the Abbot of Yvern, departed from this world into the next, young Mael succeeded him in the government of the monastery. He established therein a school, an infirmary, a guest-house, a forge, work-shops of all kinds, and sheds for building ships, and he compelled the monks to till the lands in the neighborhood. With his own hands he cultivated the garden of the Abbey, he worked in metals, he instructed the novices, and his life was gently gliding along like a stream that reflects the heaven and fertilizes the fields.

At the close of the day this servant of God was accustomed to seat himself on the cliff, in the place that is today still called St. Mael's chair. At his feet the rocks bristling with green seaweed and tawny wrack seemed like black dragons as they faced the foam of the waves with their monstrous breasts. He watched the sun descending into the ocean like a red Host whose glorious blood gave a purple tone to the clouds and to the summits of the waves. And the holy man saw in this the image of the mystery of the Cross, by which the divine blood has clothed the earth with a royal purple. In the offing a line of dark blue marked the shores of the island of Gad, where St. Bridget, who had been given the veil by St. Malo, ruled over a convent of women.

Now Bridget, knowing the merits of the venerable Mael, begged from him some work of his hands as a rich present. Mael cast a hand-bell of bronze for her and, when it was finished, he blessed it and threw it into the sea. And the bell went ringing towards the coast of Gad, where St. Bridget, warned by the sound of the bell upon the waves, received it piously, and carried it in solemn procession with singing of psalms into the chapel of the convent.

Thus the holy Mael advanced from virtue to virtue. He had already passed through two-thirds of the way of life, and he hoped peacefully to reach his terrestrial end in the midst of his spiritual brethren, when he knew by a certain sign that the Divine wisdom had decided otherwise, and that the Lord was calling him to less peaceful but not less meritorious labors.

II.

The Apostolical Vocation of Saint Mael.

ONE day as he walked in meditation to the furthest point of a tranquil beach, for which rocks jutting out into the sea formed a rugged dam, he saw a trough of stone which floated like a boat upon the waters.

It was in a vessel similar to this that St. Guirec, the great St. Columba, and so many holy men from Scotland and from Ireland had gone forth to evangelize Armorica. More recently still, St. Avoye having come from England, ascended the river Auray in a mortar made of rose-colored granite into which children were afterwards placed in order to make them strong ; St. Vouga passed from Hibernia to Cornwall on a rock whose fragments, preserved at Penmarch, will cure of fever such pilgrims as place these splinters on their heads. St. Samson entered the Bay of St. Michael's Mount in a granite vessel which will one day be called St. Samson's basin. It is because of these facts that when he saw the stone trough the holy Mael understood that the Lord intended him for the apostolate of the pagans who still peopled the coast and the Breton islands.

He handed his ashen staff to the holy Budoc, thus investing him with the government of the monastery. Then, furnished with bread, a barrel of fresh water, and the book of the Holy Gospels, he entered the stone trough which carried him gently to the island of Hoedic.

This island is perpetually buffeted by the winds. In it some poor men fished among the clefts of the rocks and laboriously cultivated vegetables in gardens full of sand and pebbles that were sheltered from the wind by walls of barren stone and hedges of tamarisk. A beautiful fig-tree raised itself in a hollow of the island and thrust forth its branches far and wide. The inhabitants of the island used to worship it.

And the holy Mael said to them : " You worship this tree because it is beautiful. Therefore you are capable of feeling beauty. Now I come to reveal to you the hidden beauty." And he taught them the Gospel. And after having instructed them, he baptized them with salt and water.

The islands of Morbihan were more numerous in those times than they are today. For since then many have been swallowed up by the sea. St. Mael evangelized sixty of them. Then in his granite trough he ascended the river Auray. And after sailing for three hours he landed before a Roman house. A thin column of smoke went up from the roof. The holy man crossed the threshold on which there was a mosaic representing a dog with its hind legs out-stretched and its lips drawn back. He was welcomed by an old couple, Marcus Combabus and Valeria Moerens, who lived there on the products of their lands. There was a portico round the interior court the columns of which were painted red, half their height upwards from the base. A fountain made of shells stood against the wall and under the portico there rose an altar with a niche in which the master of the house had placed some little idols made of baked earth and whitened with whitewash. Some represented winged children, others Apollo or Mercury, and several were in the form of a naked woman twisting her hair. But the holy Mael, observing

those figures, discovered among them the image of a young mother holding a child upon her knees.

Immediately pointing to that image he said :

“ That is the Virgin, the mother of God. The poet Virgil foretold her in Sibylline verses before she was born and, in angelical tones he sang *Jam redit et virgo*. Throughout heathendom prophetic figures of her have been made, like that which you, O Marcus, have placed upon this altar. And without doubt it is she who has protected your modest household. Thus it is that those who faithfully observe the natural law prepare themselves for the knowledge of revealed truths.”

Marcus Combabus and Valeria Moerens, having been instructed by this speech, were converted to the Christian faith. They received baptism together with their young freed-woman, Caelia Avitella, who was dearer to them than the light of their eyes. All their tenants renounced paganism and were baptized on the same day.

Marcus Combabus, Valeria Moerens, and Caelia Avitella led thenceforth a life full of merit. They died in the Lord and were admitted into the canon of the saints.

For thirty-seven years longer the blessed Mael evangelized the pagans of the inner lands. He built two hundred and eighteen chapels and seventy-four abbeys.

Now on a certain day in the city of Vannes, where he was preaching the Gospel, he learned that the monks of Yvern had in his absence declined from the rule of St. Gal. Immediately, with the zeal of a hen who gathers her brood, he repaired to his erring children. He was then towards the end of his ninety-seventh year ; his figure was bent, but his arms were still strong, and his speech was poured forth abundantly like winter snow in the depths of the valleys.

Abbot Budoc restored the ashen staff to St. Mael and informed him of the unhappy state into which the Abbey had fallen. The monks were in disagreement as to the date on which the festival of Easter ought to be celebrated. Some held for the Roman calendar, others for the Greek calendar, and the horrors of a chronological schism distracted the monastery.

There also prevailed another cause of disorder. The nuns of the island of Gad, sadly fallen from their former virtue, continually came in boats to the coast of Yvern. The monks received them in the guest-house and from this there arose scandals which filled pious souls with desolation.

Having finished his faithful report, Abbot Budoc concluded in these terms:

“ Since the coming of these nuns the innocence and peace of the monks are at an end.”

“ I readily believe it,” answered the blessed Mael. “ For woman is a cleverly constructed snare by which we are taken even before we suspect the trap. Alas ! the delightful attraction of these creatures is exerted with even greater force from a distance than when they are close at hand. The less they satisfy desire the more they inspire it. This is the reason why a poet wrote this verse to one of them :

When present I avoid thee, but when away I find thee.

Thus we see, my son, that the blandishments of carnal love have more power over hermits and monks than over men who live in the world. All through my life the demon of lust has tempted me in various ways, but his strongest temptations did not come to me from meeting a woman, however beautiful and fragrant she was. They came to me from the image of an absent woman. Even now, though full of days and approaching my ninety-eighth year, I am often led by the Enemy to sin against chastity, at least in thought. At night when I am cold in my bed and my frozen old bones rattle together with a dull sound I hear voices reciting the second verse of the third Book of the Kings : ‘ Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin : and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat,’ and the devil shows me a girl in the bloom of youth who says to me : ‘ I am thy Abishag ; I am thy Shunamite. Make, O my lord, room for me in thy couch.’

“ Believe me,” added the old man, “ it is only by the special aid of Heaven that a monk can keep his chastity in act and in intention.”

Applying himself immediately to restore innocence and peace to the monastery, he corrected the calendar according to the calculations of chronology and astronomy and he compelled all the monks to accept his decision ; he sent the women who had declined from St. Bridget’s rule back to their convent ; but far from driving them away brutally, he caused them to be led to their boat with singing of psalms and litanies.

“ Let us respect in them,” he said, “ the daughters of Bridget and the betrothed of the Lord. Let us beware lest we imitate the Pharisees who affect to despise sinners. The sin of these women and not their persons should be abased, and they should be made ashamed of what they have done and not of what they are, for they are all creatures of God.”

And the holy man exhorted his monks to obey faithfully the rule of their order.

“ When it does not yield to the rudder,” said he to them, “ the ship yields to the rock.”

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The Temptation of Saint Mael.

THE blessed Mael had scarcely restored order in the Abbey of Yvern before he learned that the inhabitants of the island of Hoedic, his first catechumens and the dearest of all to his heart, had returned to paganism, and that they were hanging crowns of flowers and fillets of wool to the branches of the sacred fig-tree.

The boatman who brought this sad news expressed a fear that soon those misguided men might violently destroy the chapel that had been built on the shore of their island.

The holy man resolved forthwith to visit his faithless children, so that he might lead them back to the faith and prevent them from yielding to such sacrilege. As he went down to the bay where his stone trough was moored, he turned his eyes to the sheds, then filled with the noise of saws and of hammers, which, thirty years before, he had erected on the fringe of that bay for the purpose of building ships.

At that moment, the Devil, who never tires, went out from the sheds and, under the appearance of a monk called Samson, he approached the holy man and tempted him thus :

“ Father, the inhabitants of the island of Hoedic commit sins unceasingly. Every moment that passes removes them farther from God. They are soon going to use violence towards the chapel that you have raised with your own venerable hands on the shore of their island. Time is pressing. Do you not think that your stone trough would carry you more quickly towards them if it were rigged like a boat and furnished with a rudder, a mast, and a sail, for then you would be driven by the wind ? Your arms are still strong and able to steer a small craft. It would be a good thing, too, to put a sharp stem in front of your apostolic trough. You are much too clear-sighted not to have thought of it already.”

“ Truly time is pressing,” answered the holy man. “ But to do as you say, Samson, my son, would it not be to make myself like those men of little faith who do not trust the Lord ? Would it not be to despise the gifts of Him who has sent me this stone vessel without rigging or sail ?”

This question, the Devil, who is a great theologian, answered by another.

“ Father, is it praiseworthy to wait, with our arms folded, until help comes from on high, and to ask everything from Him who can do all things, instead of acting by human prudence and helping ourselves ?”

“ It certainly is not,” answered the holy Mael, “ and to neglect to act by human prudence is tempting God.”

“ Well,” urged the Devil, “ is it not prudence in this case to rig the vessel ?”

“ It would be prudence if we could not attain our end in any other way.”

“ Is your vessel then so very speedy ?”

“ It is as speedy as God pleases.”

“ What do you know about it ? It goes like Abbot Budoc’s mule. It is a regular old tub. Are you forbidden to make it speedier ?”

“ My son, clearness adorns your words, but they are unduly over-confident. Remember that this vessel is miraculous.”

“ It is, father. A granite trough that floats on the water like a cork is a miraculous trough. There is not the slightest doubt about it. What conclusion do you draw from that ?”

“ I am greatly perplexed. Is it right to perfect so miraculous a machine by human and natural means ?”

“ Father, if you lost your right foot and God restored it to you, would not that foot be miraculous ?”

“ Without doubt, my son.”

“ Would you put a shoe on it ?”

“ Assuredly.”

“ Well, then, if you believe that one may cover a miraculous foot with a natural shoe, you should also believe that we can put natural rigging on a miraculous boat. That is clear. Alas ! Why must the holiest persons have their moments of weakness and despondency ? The most illustrious of the apostles of Brittany could accomplish works worthy of eternal glory . . . But his spirit is tardy and his hand is slothful. Farewell then, father ! Travel by short and slow stages and when at last you approach the coast of Hoedic you will see the smoking ruins of the chapel that was built and consecrated by your own hands. The pagans will have burned it and with it the deacon you left there. He will be as thoroughly roasted as a black pudding.”

“ My trouble is extreme,” said the servant of God, drying with his sleeve the sweat that gathered upon his brow. “ But tell me, Samson, my son, would not rigging this stone trough be a difficult piece of work ? And if we undertook it might we not lose time instead of gaining it ?”

“ Ah ! father,” exclaimed the Devil, “ in one turning of the hour-glass the thing would be done. We shall find the necessary rigging in this shed that you have formerly built here on the coast and in those store-houses abundantly stocked through your care. I will myself regulate all the ship’s fittings. Before being a monk I was a sailor and a carpenter and I have worked at many other trades as well. Let us to work.”

Immediately he drew the holy man into an outhouse filled with all things needful for fitting out a boat.

“ That for you, father !”

And he placed on his shoulders the sail, the mast, the gaff, and the boom.

Then, himself bearing a stem and a rudder with its screw and tiller, and seizing a carpenter’s bag full of tools, he ran to the shore, dragging the holy man after him by his habit. The latter was bent, sweating, and breathless, under the burden of canvas and wood.

[1] G. Lecointe, “ Au Pays des manchots. Brussels,” 1904. 8vo.

[2] J.B. Charcot, “ Journal de l’expedition antarctique francaise. 1903-1905.” Paris. 8vo.

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