



The Mont St. Michel.
From a Drawing by the Rev. J. LOUIS PETIT, F.S.A.

LES MICHELLETTES: TWO LARGE ENGLISH CANNON OF THE
FIFTEENTH CENTURY PRESERVED AT MONT ST. MICHEL
IN NORMANDY.

From Notices communicated by BRIGADIER-GENERAL LEFRoy, R.A., F.R.S.,
with diagrams and measurements taken by Professor POLE, F.R.S.¹

IN the remarkable series of dissertations by the Emperor of the French on subjects which the events of our times have invested with more than ordinary interest, namely the volumes entitled "Etudes sur le passé et l'avenir de l'Artillerie," allusion is made to "deux bombardes prises sur les Anglais au siège de Saint Michel en 1423, et qui sont encore actuellement dans cette ville."² A representation of these guns on a small scale is given by Colonel Favé, and a larger one, but by no means accurate, will be found in the "Recueil des bouches à feu les plus remarquables," by General Marion and Captain Martin de Brettes, pl. lxxxi. As we have no cannon in England of that early period whose date is so well established, the *Michellettes* at the Mont St. Michel possess, to the English military archæologist, a very peculiar interest. In point of size the larger of the two guns is little inferior to that "muckle-mouthed murtherer" Mons Meg, of whose history, however, nothing authentic is known before her first employment in 1489; ³ it may be reasonably conjectured that, like her, they are the workmanship of those sturdy Flemish artizans who so early maintained their struggles for municipal independence by their superior mechanical skill.⁴

¹ See a more detailed account of Professor Pole's examination of these ancient cannon in a memoir by Gen. Lefroy, in the Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution, Woolwich, vol. iv., from which by his kind permission the notices here given have been extracted.

² Etudes, &c., ouvrage continué à l'aide des notes de l'Empereur, par Favé, Colonel d'Artillerie, l'un de ses aides-de-camp; 1862, vol. iii. p. 119. The pre-

cise time is stated to have been "à la fin du mois d'Octobre, 1423." Recueil, Part ii. p. 3. This is, however, the date of the commencement of the siege, not of the end of it.

³ See Mr. Hewitt's Memoir on Mon. Meg, Archæol. Journ., vol. x. p. 25. That fine old bombard is figured among the woodcuts which accompany this memoir.

⁴ In the *Comptos* of expenses of the Earl of Salisbury in the French wars,

The chronicle of Froissart, it is hardly necessary to say, does not extend to the year 1423 ; it is remarkable that Monstrelet, who relates the events of that year at some length, is silent as to the reverses of the English before Mont St. Michel, although he relates the attempt of the French to take Avranches by a *coup de main* in which they were unsuccessful.⁵ It might lead us to suppose that guns of 15 or even 19 inches calibre were not of such extreme rarity in the fifteenth century as to make their loss or their acquisition regarded as a matter of great importance, did not Richard Grafton assure us that such was not the case. The English had then, as they have usually had since, an advantage in the mechanical perfection of their artillery, and the capture must have been a notable event. Thus, speaking of the siege of "Mauns" (Le Mans) in 1424, he says :—"The Englisemen approched as nigh to the walles as they might without their losse and detriment, and shot against their walles great stones out of great Goonnes (whiche kinde of enginnes before that tyme was very little seene or hearde of in Fraunce), the strokes whereof so shaked, crushed, and riued the walles, that within fewe dayes the Citie was dispoyled of all her towres and outward defences. The citizens of Mauns much marveilyng at these newe orgaynes" gave up the town to their assailants.⁶ Even Holinshed, writing as near the time as we now are to the campaigns of Marlborough, did not regard this enterprise in Normandy as worthy of notice. Perhaps the brilliant appearance of the Maid of Orleans, four or five years later, eclipsed the minor events of the period, or the vital interest at stake in the heart of the French monarchy caused the border warfare to sink into comparative insignificance ; whatever be the cause, no allusion to this siege of Mont St. Michel has been found in any English Chronicle, nor are

rendered after his untimely death at the siege of Orleans, in 1428, a payment of a thousand marks sterling appears to John Parker of "Chesthunte," for purveying cannon, balls of stone, carts, cables, and other necessaries for the said cannon, which may have been of Flemish manufacture. There is no indication whether the cannon were wrought in England. See Letters and Papers illustrative of the Wars in France during the reign of Henry VI., vol. i. p. 407,

edited by the Rev. J. Stevenson ; Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain, &c. The use of cannon for the defence of towns in the Low Countries dates from the middle of the fourteenth century ; the huge cannon at Ghent, called *Deule Griete*, is said to have been used in 1382 by Philip Van Artevelde at the siege of Audenarde.

⁵ Monstrelet, Chron., liv. ii. c. 13.

⁶ Grafton, Chronicles of England, London, 1569 ; 3 Hen. VI., p. 507.

there any particulars relating to the siege among the valuable letters and papers illustrative of the wars of Henry VI. in France, edited by the Rev. J. Stevenson for the *Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain* now in course of publication. Fortunately, a local historian, the Abbé Desroches, has given the following interesting narrative of the events.⁷

It was, according to this writer, a period of frightful calamity. Attacks, surprises, and combats followed in rapid succession, the vanquished of to-day being often the victors of to-morrow. The country immediately around Mont St. Michel was more particularly the theatre of these exploits and disasters. Jean de Harcourt, count d'Aumale, made frequent excursions; one day he learnt that the English captain, "Jean de la Pole," had started from Normandy with two thousand five hundred men to pillage Anjou.⁸ Desirous of cutting off his retreat, d'Aumale summoned his fighting men from all parts; Jean de Lahaye, baron de Coulonces, brought a goodly company, and they were not long before they lighted upon the English who were in the act of driving off great herds of beeves. "Quand les batailles dudit comte d'Aumale et dudit la Poule Anglais," says a contemporary historian, "furent près l'une de l'autre comme un trait d'arc, les Anglais marchaient fort, et en marchant ils piquaient devant eux de gros paux . . . Il y eut de grandes vaillances d'armes faites, mais les dites Anglais ne purent soutenir le faix que leur baillaient les Français, et furent défaites et les chefs furent pris." Not long after the English set siege to Mont St. Michel by sea and land; this occurred towards the end of October, 1423. They drew on with formidable artillery and fifteen thousand men under the command of the "comte de Lescale" (Thomas, lord Scales).⁹ Their

⁷ *Histoire du Mont Saint Michel et de l'ancien diocèse d'Avranches*, par M. l'Abbé Desroches. Caen, 1839.

⁸ John de la Pole, as stated in a memoir by M. de Laroque on the Mont St. Michel (*Mém. de la Soc. des Antiqu. de Norm.*, 1826, p. lxxxiv.), was brother of the Earl of Suffolk, William de la Pole. The Earl took an active part in the French wars of Henry V. and Henry VI. under the Earl of Salisbury, and, at the siege of Orleans in 6 Hen. VI. A.D. 1428, that nobleman having been slain by a "goon,"

as Grafton relates, the Earl of Suffolk was appointed captain of the siege by the Regent, Duke of Bedford.

⁹ Thomas, lord Scales, was retained by indenture 9 Hen. V. to serve the king in his wars in France with twenty men at arms and sixty archers, and he took active part in the campaigns of the following reign. In 3 Hen. VI. he was with the Earls of Salisbury and Suffolk at the siege and taking of Le Mans and other towns and castles in France. *Dugd. Bar.*, vol. i. p. 618.

siege works (*bastilles*) surrounded the place on the land side, and they had numerous small vessels of war on the sea side. At the tidings of danger menacing this important point, the soldiers of the counties of Avranches, Vire, Coutances, Valognes and Caen hurried to the defence, and Louis d'Estouteville was made governor. The first assault of the English preceded by a fierce cannonade was a failure ; they were beaten off much discouraged, and beheld in superstitious fancy the Archangel Michael fighting in defence of the monks. Lord Scales next sought to try his fortune in a naval attack, and covered the bay with shipping. It is related that a hermit on the neighbouring Mont Tombelaine¹ gave him warning that, as often as the fleet menaced the Mont St. Michel, he beheld the Archangel stirring up storms to engulf the ships. The English commander paid no attention to these menaces ; scarcely had his vessels taken their places around the Mount when a tempest scattered them, and the shore was strewed with wreck intermingled with the bodies of those who had perished.

Profiting by the eight days of neap-tide, during which the Mont St. Michel is approachable at all hours, the English recommenced the attack by land. Their batteries were ready by sunrise, two of their pieces were of prodigious calibre and threw stone balls of great size and weight. The walls of the lower part of the town were shattered, and the English precipitated themselves in assault with greater resolution than they had shown since the siege began, but the defence was no less vigorous than the attack. The ladders were capsized, the assailants were pitched into the ditch ; they returned to the assault, replaced their ladders and succeeded in gaining the rampart. The carnage was frightful. The defenders, particularly the Sieur de Cantilly, Thomas de Brayeuse, and Guillaume Carbonel fought with desperation ; they were, however, driven into the castle. Then the monks, trembling for liberty, united with their defenders and took part in the fray ; the English seemed to multiply, and the abbey was on the point of falling into their hands, when the bravest of the knights, Jean de Guiton, Thomas de la Paluelle, Robert du Homme, Guillaume de Verdun,

¹ Tumba Beli, a twin islet about two miles distant, on which, as also on Mont St. Michel, it is supposed that there may have been an altar to Baal in the pagan

period. See a map of the bay of Mont St. Michel, Memoires, Soc. des Antiqu. de Norm., vol. xiv.

and the Chevalier de Breuilly, forced their way through the combatants, broke the English ranks and reached the pennons which they threw under foot.

Then, according to the chronicler, did the English give way. In vain did their leader endeavor to hold them together—in vain did he set an example of gallantry—he was carried away in the crowd, and the rout became general. The baggage, military chest, the equipages, artillery, and the provisions, all fell into the hands of the garrison. Dejected by this reverse the English converted the siege into a blockade which lasted till April, 1424, when the Bretons, led by Guillaume de Montfort, Bishop of St. Malo, dispersed or sunk the shipping and threw succour into the Mount. Repulsed by sea and land, the English lost courage, but they did not cease to watch the fortress and look out for a chance of gaining it by surprise. They maintained troops in the neighbourhood at Genets and at Ardevon, where a *bastille* had been constructed ; they rebuilt others at Servan and at Tanis, where the blockade was maintained, and frequent skirmishes took place.

“En ce temps,” says a contemporary historian quoted by the Abbé Desroches, “ceux de la garnison dudit Mont saillaient souvent et presque tous les jours pour escarmoucher avec les Anglais, et y fesait-on de belles armes. Messire Jean de la Haye, baron de Coulonces, était lors en un château du bas Maine nommé Mayenne la Juhais, et allaient souvent de ses gens audit Mont St. Michel, et pareillement de ceux du Mont à Mayenne ; ledit baron sçeut la manière et l'état des Anglais, et fit savoir à ceux du Mont qu'ils saillissent un certain jour et livrassent grosse escarmouche au jour de vendredy, et qu'il y serait sans faute ; et ainsi fut fait, car ledit de Coulonces partit de sa place avant le jour, accompagné de ceux de sa garnison qui chevauchèrent neuf à dix lieues ; puis eux et leurs chevaux repurent assez légèrement, et après ils remontèrent à cheval en venant tout droit vers la place des Anglais ; et cependant ceux du Mont, qui avaient bien espérance que ledit baron viendrait, saillirent pour escarmoucher et aussi firent les Anglais, et toujours Français saillaient de leur place et aussi fesaient Anglais de leur part, tellement que de deux à trois cents repousserent les Français jusque près du Mont : et lors environ deux heures après midi arrivèrent ledit baron de

Coulonces et sa compagnée, et se mit entre Ardevon et les Anglais tellement qu'ils eussent pu entrer en leur place pu . . . qu'ils n'eussent sans passer parmi les Français que avait ledit Coulonces. Finalement ceux du Mont et les autres Français chargèrent à coup sur les dits Anglais, lesquels se défendirent vaillamment, mais ils ne purent résister et furent défait, et y en eut de deux cents à douze vingts de morts et de pris, et entre les autres y fut pris Messire Nicholas Burdet, Anglais : puis ledit baron de Coulonces et sa compagnée s'en retournèrent joyeux en sa place de Mayenne la Juhais."

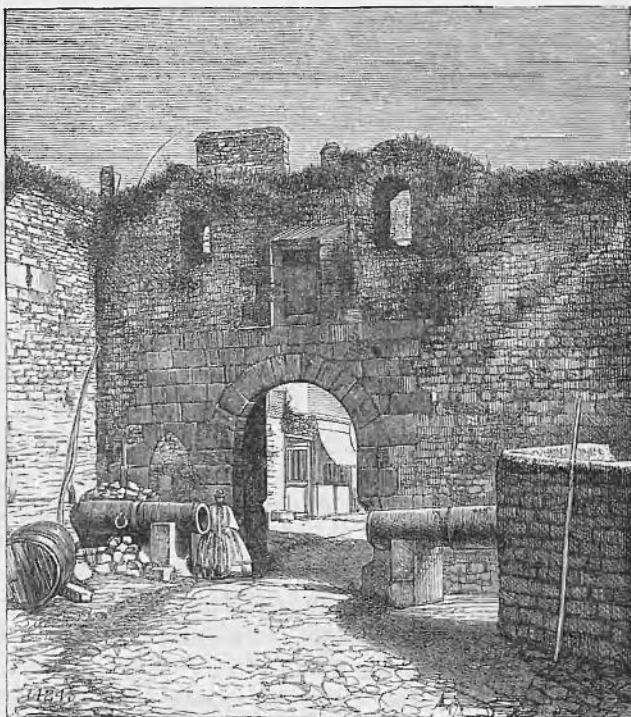
Here we have a distinct account of the disaster of the English. They were taken in rear by the baron of Coulonces, surprised, and routed ; the time appears to have been not long subsequent to the end of April, 1424. They abandoned their *bastilles* of Ardevon, Servan, and Tanis, with another near the Bourg des Pas, and, losing hope of success, they retired, leaving a garrison on the Mont Tombelaine to annoy that of the Mont St. Michel. The gallant knights, says the Abbé, erected a memorable monument of their victory. They placed at the entrance gate on the Mount two enormous pieces of ordnance of which they had made themselves masters ; these were formed, as described hereafter, of thick bars of iron bound by hoops of the same material.

Professor Pole, F.R.S., whose association with the Committee on Iron Defences has led him to take a warm interest in subjects relating to artillery, having proposed to spend his vacation in 1863 on the coast of Normandy, his attention was called by General Lefroy to these curious relics of ancient warfare, and with characteristic activity he forthwith proceeded to visit and examine them. By the assistance of M. Marquet, Director of the prison establishment at the Mont St. Michel, his researches were completely successful.² We are indebted to Mr. Pole for the following description of these remarkable specimens of wrought iron cannon at so early a period :—

² Professor Pole's graphic and spirited narrative of his explorations, and of the difficulties which he successfully encountered between the rival authorities on the Rock,—the maire of the little fishing village or *commune*, to which, as alleged, the guns belonged,—the commandant of the fortress—and M. Mar-

quet, the courteous "Directeur de la Maison Centrale de détentio," will be found fully detailed in the Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution at Woolwich, vol. iv., from which as before stated we have been permitted to extract this curious account of *les Michellettes*.

"The guns now stand in front of the second gate of the fortress, their general position being here shown (see wood-cut). They are in bad condition, being much corroded, the rust covering them in large flaky masses ; this renders it difficult to obtain accurate dimensions, or to gather satisfactory details as to their construction. The particulars given, however, may be relied on, as I took them with all possible care. I found that each of the guns had a granite ball in

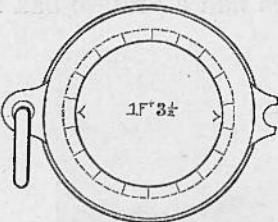


View of the Gateway and position of *les Michellettes*, from a Photograph taken in 1863.

the barrel, some distance down, which had been there beyond the memory of the oldest inhabitant, and they had become firmly fixed by rust and dirt. To examine the interior it was necessary to draw the balls, as well as to clear the barrels of a mass of hard conglomerated rubbish that filled them behind the balls. It was not possible, in the time, to effect this latter operation perfectly, and therefore the dimensions of the small chamber may be somewhat uncertain. The two guns are of different sizes.

"The larger gun (fig. 1) is on the south side of the gate. It is 19 in. in calibre, and 12 ft. in length, of which the chamber composes more than one-fourth. The granite balls, of which several lie about, are about 18 in. in diameter.³ The general construction is evidently similar to that of the smaller gun, but the bars and hoops are not so distinctly

visible ; the internal longitudinal bars are about 3 in. wide ; the hoops are visible round the back end of the barrel. The breech-chamber piece consists externally of ten longitudinal bars, the construction being evidently similar to that of the smaller gun. The muzzle of the gun is somewhat ragged, and it has no projecting



rings like the small gun ; possibly a piece may have been carried away. There are no eyes or rings ; there is a trace of a projection where one of the eyes may have been, but I found nothing corresponding to it on the opposite side.

"The smaller gun is on the north or left-hand side of the gateway. The dimensions will be seen from the accompanying woodcut (fig. 2) ; it is 15 in. in calibre, and 11 ft. 9 in. in length. The granite ball is rough in shape, about $\frac{3}{4}$ or an inch less in diameter than the calibre. The construction of the barrel is clearly visible ; it is formed of wrought-iron, being in fact a true 'built-up' gun. The inside is made up of longitudinal bars, each about $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide by 1 in. thick, and round the outside are seen the lines of hoops, each about $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide, placed quite close to each other. It is not possible to discover whether the hooping is single, or in several layers. The exterior of the breech or powder-chamber consists, not of hoops, but of longitudinal bars, their flat surfaces giving to it the section of a polygon. This would seem exceedingly weak, but the longitudinal marks on the exterior are perfectly distinct, and there is not the slightest trace of hooping. The construction of this chamber and of the breech end of the barrel is obscure ; I examined the parts as carefully as possible, but without gaining anything towards an explanation. The hoops are

³ One of these shot has been recently presented by M. Marquet to the Museum of Artillery at Woolwich.

distinct on the commencement of the barrel, and this made me suspect, before examining the interior, that the breech-piece was solid, and that the powder had been placed in the barrel, as in modern guns. But, on clearing the inside, the chamber appeared. The gun has an eye on each side for a ring ; one of the rings, a split one, is still there, as shown in the woodcut ; the other eye is broken, and the ring gone. The eyes appear to have formed one mass with the hoop encircling the gun at that place. The powder-chamber of this gun appears shallower than that of the larger one ; it is, however, possible that the bottom may have become stopped up with some hard substance. The exterior of both guns is rough and irregular ; this is doubtless caused to a great extent by rust, but I think that the surface must originally have been far from smooth and even. I cannot find any trace of a vent-hole in either gun.

"I estimate the present weight of the large gun as about $5\frac{1}{3}$ tons, and that of the small gun as about $3\frac{1}{4}$ tons. The granite ball for the large gun would probably weigh about 300 lbs.

"The Mont St. Michel is distant about 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the nearest coast, and the intervening sands are overflowed at high water, except at neap-tides. The besiegers cannot, I should think, have used the guns on the shore, but, as they succeeded in breaching the walls, they must have either fired them afloat or mounted them in battery on the sands. Tradition affirms the latter, and adds that, on the repulse of the English, the knights took possession of the guns and hoisted them high up on the rock, where they remained till 1793. In that turbulent year, it is said, the Revolutionists threw them down upon the sands again, and they lay there, washed by the sea, till about twenty or twenty-five years ago, when they were placed in their present position. I have been indebted to M. Marquet, the director of the Maison Centrale at Mont St. Michel, for the facilities given me in the examination of the guns."

THE obscurity of the transaction in which the *Michellettes* were lost and won induces us to annex extracts from two other writers, furnished to Professor Pole by M. Marquet. It is to be regretted that he had not been able to procure an extract from the contemporary Latin Chronicle

which is probably the foundation of all the accounts, and is said to exist in the public library at Avranches. It might explain certain puzzling discrepancies of date. Lehericher makes the siege last with intervals from 1423 to 1427, in which year he places the capture of the cannon, and he disconnects this event entirely from the successful surprise of the Baron de Coulonces. Girard brings the whole transaction down to the years 1433-4. The authority of the Abbe Desroches may be preferred, supported as it is by the authors of the *Etudes* and the *Récueil*. It is also the date given in the *Histoire Pittoresque*.

The following account is taken from "Avranchin Monumental et Historique," by Edouard Lehericher:—⁴

"Cependant les Anglais s'étaient emparés de toute la Normandie, et avaient peu à peu resserrer le cercle de leurs troupes autour du Mont St. Michel, le seul point de toute la province où flottait encore la bannière de France, et où l'indépendance nationale était vaillamment défendue par quelques moines et quelques chevaliers. Il fallait que ce Mont, si merveilleux en tout, offrit encore le rare spectacle d'une forteresse qui garde la nationalité quand tout le pays est conquis, foyer sacré où vit le feu qui remplira un jour les cœurs et les enflammera contre l'étranger. Les moines du Mont, se voyant sans pasteur et leurs gens de guerre sans capitaine, s'adressèrent au Dauphin, qui dirigeait les affaires dans la maladie de son père. Le prince envoya Jean d'Harcourt, comte d'Aumale, qui fut bien reçu des religieux, parce qu'il venait pour les défendre et parce qu'il promit de respecter leurs priviléges. Les Anglais avaient mis garnison sur Tombelaine, et avaient fortifié ce rocher de hautes et fortes murailles, sans que les soldats du Mont pussent les empêcher, les trois rivières de la baie coulant alors entre les deux places. Nonobstant, se voyants toujours avoir du pire, ils redoublèrent leurs troupes, et firent le siège du Mont par terre et par mer, le roi insulaire y ayant envoié un grand nombre de vaisseaux du coste de la grève bastirent plusieurs forts et bastions, entre autres une bastille en la rive d'Ardevon et une dans la paroisse d'Espas. C'était en 1423. Le duc de Bretagne, craignant pour lui-même, fit armer secrètement dans le port de St Malo quelques navires par l'évêque et le sire de Beaufort, son amiral. Les Bretons, ayants cramponné les vaisseaux et combattants main à main, mirent la plus part des Anglais à mort et le reste en déroute, ce que voyants ceux du fort d'Ardevon se sauvinrent à la fuite. Le Mont fut ainsi ravitaillé et débloqué pour quelques jours. Mais les Anglais revinrent et se fortifièrent dans leurs bastilles ; la guerre devint une guerre d'escarmouches dont les grèves étaient le théâtre. Un intéressant épisode de ce siège fut la défaite des Anglais pris entre les troupes du Mont et celles du baron de Coulonces qui venait de Mayenne. Un autre fut la victoire du comte d'Aumale et de Coulonces sur les Anglais qui faisaient une pointe sur l'Anjou. Mais les François furent défait à Verneuil par le duc de Bedford, et Jean d'Harcourt y resta parmi les morts. Son successeur, comme capitaine du Mont, fut Jean, batard d'Orléans, comte de Mortain, qui, ne pouvant venir lui-même, envoya au Mont Nicholas Saisnel son

⁴ Many of the particulars in this narrative appear to be taken from a MS. at Avranches, No. 22, entitled "Histoire de la célèbre abbaye du Mont Saint Michel

au péril de la mer, recueillie des anciens titres et chartres par Jean Huynes, qui la composa en 1638."

lieutenant. Le monastère était dans une telle détresse qu'il lui fallut engager son argenterie à Dinan et à Saint Malo. Cependant les Anglais attaquaient le Mont si furieusement qu'ils semblaient estre capables de l'ebranler. Le roi nomma en 1425, à la place du batard d'Orléans, Louis d'Estouteville, illustre chevalier qui avait sacrifié, pour rester Français, la plus grande fortune de la Basse-Normandie. Une de ses premières mesures fut d'empêcher les femmes et les enfans de se refugier dans l'abbaye pendant les assauts, et de transporter ailleurs les prisonniers de guerre, débarrassant ainsi une place affamée de bouches inutiles. Cependant les Anglais redoublaient d'efforts ; la garnison de Tombelaine avait été renforcée et escarmoucheait tous les jours contre les Michelistes. Ceux du Mont, se décidant à hasarder une sorte, furent assez heureux pour écraser les ennemis dans les grèves, peu desquels se garantirent de la mort ou de la prison, ce qui arriva vers la feste de la Toussaint, 1425. Ce succès anima tellement les moines qu'ils engagèrent en Bretagne les croix, mitres, calices, &c. Une partie de l'argent servit à faire fortifier la ville : aux remparts de Rob. Jolivet on ajouta en cette année des tours entre les autres, des demi-lunes avec parapet et marches-coulis ou massacres ; l'on fit aussi la porte de la ville ainsy qu'elle est à présent avec son pont-levis et le logis du dessus, une grande grille ou herse. Les religieux obtinrent du roi, en 1426, de battre monnaie pour l'espace de trois ans.

"L'année suivante, année glorieuse dans les fastes du Mont, la veille de la Saint Aubert, les Anglais vinrent au nombre de plus de vingt mille, sous la conduite de lord Scale, tous bien armés avec plusieurs machines espouvantables et divers engins de guerre ; ayant observe le flux et le reflux de la mer, ils dressèrent une batterie si furieuse contre les murailles qu'ils y firent brèche, mais ils furent reçus si vertement par ceux du Mont, conduits par Louis d'Estouteville, qu'il demeura presque deux mille Anglois de tués dans les murailles et sur les grèves. Le peu qui s'échappa se refugia en leur bastille d'Ardevon, craignant qu'on allât leur y donner quelque aubade. . . . Cette victoire peut être comparée à celle de Josué, d'autant qu'il ne s'en trouva aucun du Mont ni de tué ni de blessé, ce qui fut attribué à la protection de S. Michel et aux mérites de S. Aubert. Il reste encore des trophées de cette victoire ; ce sont les deux énormes canons, appellés les Michelettes, qui furent pris sur les Anglois. Cette victoire avait été remportée par Louis d'Estouteville et 119 chevaliers qui s'étaient jetés dans la place, et dont les noms furent inscrits avec leurs armes dans le chœur de l'église en cette année 1427. Charles VII. envoya au Mont Dunois, pour complimenter les héros."

To this relation may be appended the following extract from the "Histoire Géologique, Archéologique et Pittoresque du Mont Saint Michel," by Fulgence Girard, p. 226 :—

"Le Mont St. Michel jouissait depuis quelques années d'une sorte de trêve armée, qu'il devait moins à la protection de ses boulevarts qu'à la terreur dont avait frappe l'ennemi le succès de ses armes, lorsqu'un désastre inopiné éclata dans ses remparts, et vint ranimer les espérances des Anglois. Un incendie ayant réduit en cendres presque toute la ville, le lundi de la Quasimodo, 1433, l'ennemi pensa pouvoir, à la faveur de cette catastrophe, donner enfin satisfaction à sa vengeance. Sire d'Escalles prépara dès-lors un effort désespéré contre cette place. Une armée de 20,000 combattans se réunit sous ses ordres, et, trainant une artillerie

formidable, parut l'année 1434, le 17 Juin, sur les grèves ; son arrivée était calculée sur l'époque mensuelle des basses eaux. Ces épouvantables machines de guerre, dressées en batterie sur les grèves, ouvrirent bientôt contre les remparts un feu terrible ; ébranlées par le choc multiple des boulets de granit vomis par ces pièces énormes, les murailles s'ouvrirent, croulèrent avec fracas. Encouragé par ce succès, l'ennemi s'élance avec audace à travers ces décombres ; les assiégés ne se jetteront pas avec moins de résolution dans la brèche pour en défendre les abords et le passage. Le choc fut terrible. Les chevaliers Normands avaient à conserver quinze années de gloire ; les barons Anglais voulaient effacer vingt défaites par un succès. C'était un jour décisif pour les uns et pour les autres ; aussi l'assaut fut-il aussi impétueux que la défense fut héroïque. Aux pierres et aux flèches, qui se croisèrent d'abord de la grève et des vemparts, succédèrent bientôt sur la brèche des armes plus terribles, la hache d'armes, l'épée et la lance entamèrent les boucliers et brisèrent les cuirasses. Une lutte corps à corps jette à ces décombres sa sanglante mêlée. Louis d'Estouteville et de Verdun électrisent leurs compagnons par les prodiges de leur courage ; l'exaltation de l'ennemi s'épuise en longs et vains efforts. En vain un de ses capitaines, la visière levée, s'efforce-t-il de pousser à l'assaut des forces nouvelles ; égorgés sur les remparts ou renversés sur les masses inférieures, les assaillans y jettent un désordre que réparent quelque temps la voix et l'exemple des chefs : l'ennemi perd pied enfin, l'épouvante se met dans ses rangs. Les assiégés le pressent avec plus de fureur ; la confusion est à son comble, la terreur se généralise, chacun, jettant ses armes, ne songe plus qu'à fuir.

“ Un religieux, témoin de ces exploits, décrit ainsi cet assaut dans un fragment manuscrit rapporté par M. Desroches :—

“ ‘ Quel spectacle ! voilà que, sur la brèche, on combat corps à corps. Dieu des armées, défendez vos pauvres serviteurs. Notre gouverneur est entouré d'ennemis ; il se dégage et monte sur le troisième bastion ; il renverse tout ce qui lui résiste, et arrache les enseignes ennemis. L'épée de Guillaume de Verdun vole en éclats ; il s'arme d'une hache et porte des coups terribles. Avec quel courage aussi cet homme, couvert d'armes rouges, fait ranger aux pieds des murailles les troupes Anglaises ! l'épée haute et le visage découvert, il les anime et les ramène au combat. On précipite sur eux des pierres, des poutres, des rochers. Saint Michel combat pour nous : les ennemis sont repoussés.’ ”

“ Quelque étranger que soit ce morceau, par ses expressions, au style de cette époque, comme le texte a pu être traduit ou modifié par l'écrivain auquel nous l'empruntons, nous avons cru pouvoir le rapporter, en couvrant toute fois notre responsabilité par cette remarque.

“ Emporté par l'exaltation de la victoire, les Normands fondent sur l'ennemi, le poursuivent à travers ces grèves qu'ils couvrent de carnage, et le rejettent jusque dans ses bastilles. L'artillerie Anglaise, pièces énormes formées de lames de fer soudées et unies par des cercles de même métal, fut le monument de ce succès mémorable qui coûta 2000 soldats à l'armée insulaire. Cette attaque fut la dernière entreprise que tenterent les Anglais contre le Mont Saint Michel. Découragés par cette défaite, ils se bornèrent à le surveiller par les garnisons de Tombelène et de leurs bastilles.”

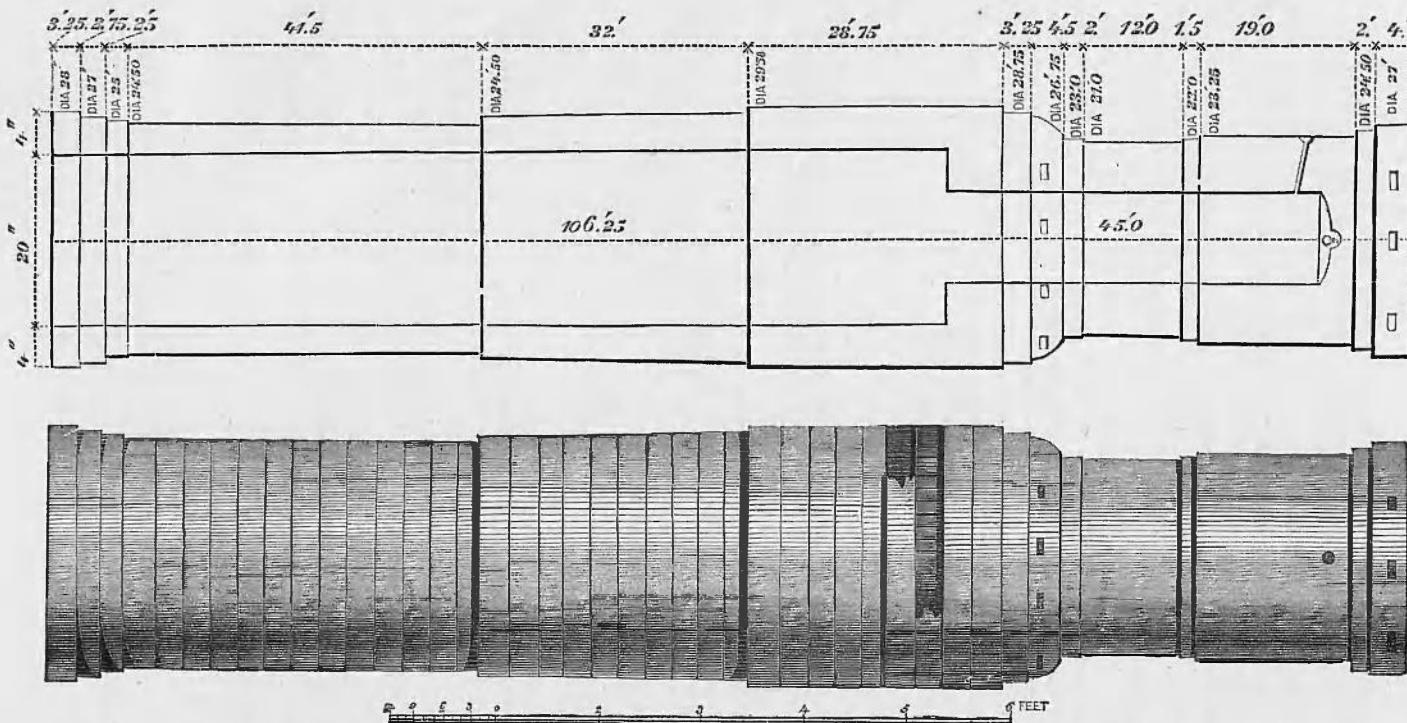
We are indebted to the memoir by General Lefroy, given in the Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution at Woolwich, and of which,

through his accustomed kindness, we have been permitted to avail ourselves, for the foregoing extracts. There are some notices of the history of the Mont St. Michel at the eventful period in question to which he has not adverted, and which may be acceptable as supplementary to his relation. The late M. de Gerville, one of the most erudite of antiquaries in Normandy, truly observed how extraordinary it is that the date of so memorable a siege, which occurred at no remote period from our times, should not be ascertainable with certainty. (*Mémoires, Antiqu. de Norm.*, 1827, tom. iv. p. 51.) He declines, however, to enter upon the inquiry, and refers to a Memoir communicated to the Society of Antiquaries of Normandy by M. de Laroque, relating to the enterprises of the English in Normandy and the attack on the Mont St. Michel. His narrative, including a circumstantial account of the sanguinary defeat of the English by the count d'Aumale at la Broussinière in 1423, and of the subsequent siege of the fortress, seems in accordance with that cited by General Lefroy; he gives the close of October in that year as the time of the commencement of the siege, and the last days of March, or the beginning of April, 1424, as its termination. (*Mémoires, Antiqu. de Norm.*, 1827, tom. iii. p. lxxxiv.) The English, M. de Laroque observes, having become masters of all Normandy, again appeared before the Mont St. Michel, and established a bastille at Ardevon, a league distant; it was demolished and the siege abandoned. Another unsuccessful attempt, he adds, seems to have been made in 1427.

We learn from the Memoir by M. de Gerville, above cited, that besides the two remarkable cannon which still exist at the gate, as described by Professor Pole, the defeated English abandoned many others of various calibres; of those pieces Thomas Le Roy states, in his "*Livre des curieuses recherches du Mont-Saint-Michel*," commenced in 1647, a MS. formerly in the abbey at that place and now in the library at Avranches, that he had seen several; the remainder had been sold in the sixteenth century by the commanders of the fortress. (*Mémoires, ut supra*, p. 53.) We would invite the notice of the antiquary who may desire to prosecute any further inquiries to M. de Gerville's detailed account of the MSS. at Avranches (*ibid.* p. 23), the most remarkable being those described by the historian de Thou, as formerly preserved at the Abbey of Mont St. Michel, and also of other authorities which may be consulted with advantage.

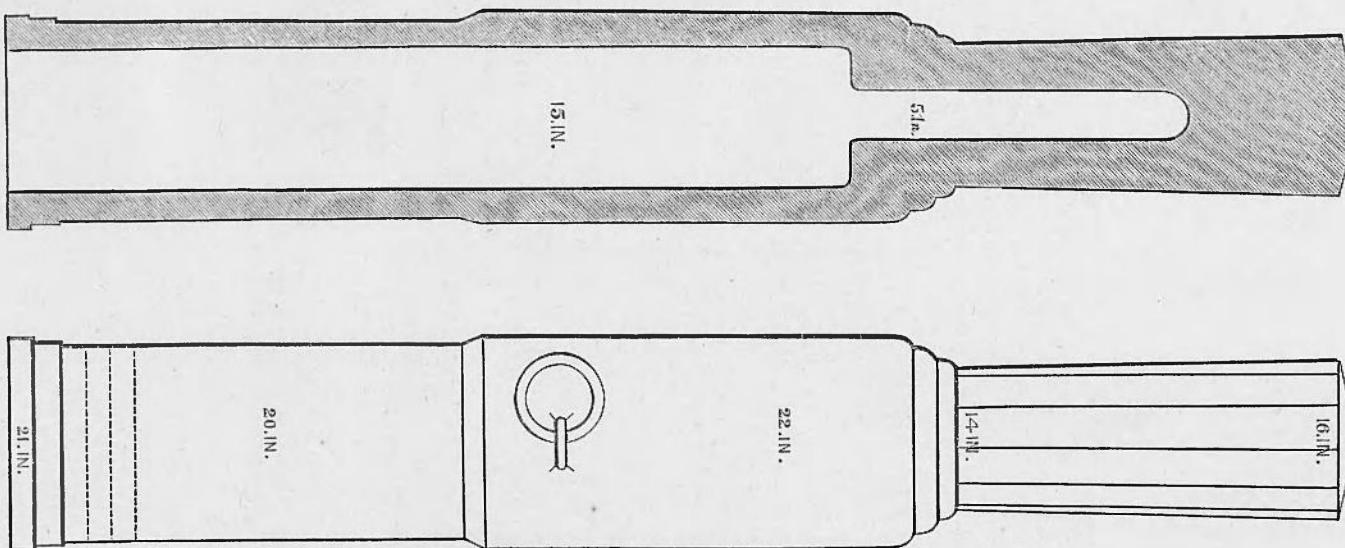
We are indebted to the Rev. J. L. Petit for the accompanying representation of the Mont St. Michel, from one of his skilful drawings engraved in his *Architectural Studies in France*, p. 160. It has been suggested that to some of our readers the comparison of the renowned bombard at Edinburgh Castle with those which, by the kind permission of General Lefroy, are now placed before them cannot fail to be acceptable; the woodcut formerly given with Mr. Hewitt's Memoir in this Journal, vol. x., is accordingly here reproduced.

ANCIENT ORDNANCE PRESERVED AT EDINBURGH CASTLE.



Mons Meg, used at the siege of Dumbarton, 1489, and at Norham, 1497, in the reign of James IV., King of Scots.

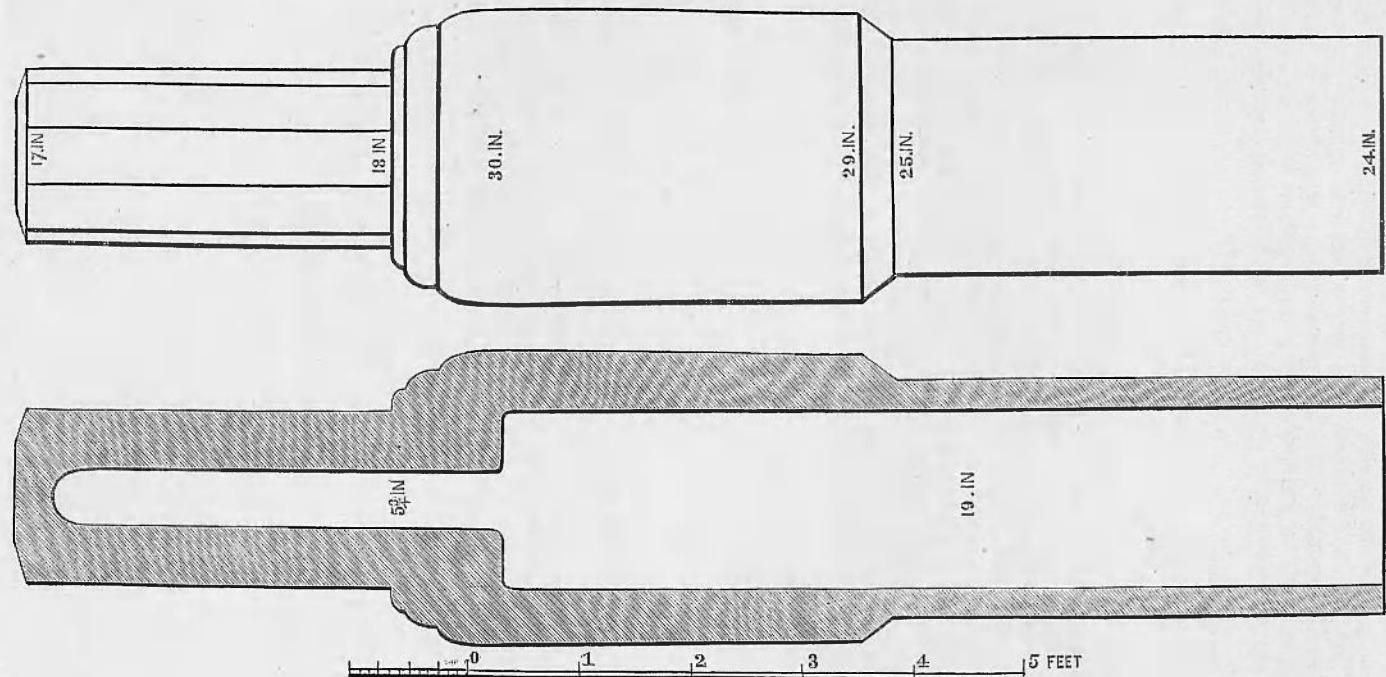
Fig. II.



Ancient English Cannon at Mont St. Michel, in Normandy.

From measurements and diagrams by Professor Pole, F.R.S.

Fig. I.



Ancient English Cannon at Mont St. Michel, in Normandy.

From measurements and diagrams by Professor Pole, F.R.S.