

# “Yannic-ann-ôd”

By A. Le Braz

The drowned, whose bodies have not been recovered and buried in consecrated ground, wander continually along the shore.

They may often be heard in the night wailing piteously,—“*Tou! Tou! Tou!*”<sup>1</sup>

People in the Cornouailles country say to one another, when this cry is heard: “*It is Yannic-ann-ôd*” (“*Little John of the Beach*”) wailing.

All the wailing drowned are called collectively, and separately, “*Yannic-ann-ôd*.” “*Yannic-ann-ôd*” is not malicious, so long as his melancholy wail is not responded to or imitated. But woe to the imprudent man who plays that game! If you answer him once, “*Yannic-ann-ôd*” springs towards you; if you answer twice he comes nearer, and if you answer three times, he breaks your neck!

A farm-servant was coming home one fine evening from taking the cattle into the fields, the summer being sufficiently advanced to send them out at night. As he went along the beach he heard the sound of the sabots of “*Yannic-ann-ôd*” upon the shingles. This servant was a sharp fellow. He knew all the stories that were told on winter evenings about “*Yannic-ann-ôd*,” and he had made up his mind to find out all he could about them on the first possible chance. “Pon my word,” he said to himself, “I should like to know for certain!”

Like a sensible youth, however, he waited till he came nearer to the farm before answering the Wanderer of the shore, who kept shouting “*Tou*,” in shrillest, saddest tones.

At length he in his turn loudly shouted

“*Tou!*”

Doubtless “*Yannic-ann-ôd*” was amazed at such audacity, for he grew silent all at once. Nevertheless, the servant observed that he was approaching him. His shadow stood out at some distance off, across his path in the moonlight. Then once more the cries began. This time the servant refrained from echoing them until he had reached the middle of the farmyard.

“*Yannic-ann-ôd*” seemed also very near the gate.

He shouted with increasing wrath, “*Tou! Tou! Tou!*”

There was provocation in his plaint.

The servant set out and ran as fast as he could, as though he had wings on his heels. Having reached the threshold of the farmhouse he cried for the third time, “*Tou!*” as he shut the heavy oak door.

A terrible blow echoed upon the wood, sufficient to shatter it to pieces. And the voice of “*Yannic-ann-ôd*” was raised threateningly: “I will let it pass this time, but if you begin it again, I will do for you!”

The servant thought that about enough.

(Related by René Alain, Quimper, 1889.)

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<sup>1</sup> Cornouailles, or Cornwall, takes its name from “Kerné,” (“*la Cornë*”), the land’s point. This name, given to Cornouailles in Brittany (as to our Cornwall), represents its position as an extremity, which in Latin became “*Gornu Gatlliae*.”

