

The Pilgrimage of Marie Sigorel

By A. Le Braz

One morning, as I was getting up, Marie Sigorel entered my house. She was a neighbour of mine, who lived by undertaking pilgrimages for others.

"Pardon me," she said, "but did I not hear you say you had made a vow to go on pilgrimage to the Chapel of St Sampson?"

"Yes, very likely."

"Shall we go together? I have undertaken to go there, to make a pilgrimage on behalf of a child for whom a vow had been made to take it there, but who died before the vow was fulfilled."

"Indeed," I answered, "I should like nothing better!"

I made a few preparations, and we started.

All went well at first. But no sooner had we gone beyond the boundaries of our parish than I fancied I perceived that Marie Sigorel dragged herself laboriously along.

"What is the matter?" I asked. "We have hardly gone a league, and you seem tired already!"

"Yes, it is strange, and I know not what it can be. I feel as though I had a weight on my shoulders, which gets heavier the further I go!"

We continued our journey all the same.

But I had constantly to wait for Marie. She kept turning round her head perpetually, too, in an anxious, restless manner.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

I was not very comfortable myself. I seemed to hear a little faint footstep behind us, like a child's step. But we were quite alone on the road.

"Do you hear nothing?" said Marie Sigorel in reply to my question.

"Yes," I said; "what can it mean?"

"I do not know. We should do well to wait a while. Besides, I am exhausted. I feel as if I had a pound of lead on my shoulders."

We sat down on a heap of stones. I reflected somewhat sadly. Suddenly I had an inspiration.

"Marie Sigorel," I said, "did you pray by the grave of the dead child before starting?"

"No, I did not. I did not think of it."

"Oh! Now I understand it all! If you had gone to the churchyard and asked the child to walk before you, we should not have had it at our heels all the way, and you would not have had the weight of the vow upon your shoulders!"

"I have been very foolish! But what had we better do?"

I should have been very much puzzled to know what to advise Marie Sigorel to do, when, fortunately, an old woman was seen coming towards us along the road. I went up to her, and explained to her the dilemma of my companion.

"You are an aged person," I added, "and doubtless one who has had wide experience. Can you give us any advice?"

The old woman turned towards Marie Sigorel.

"Have you an offering for the Saint in your pocket?" she enquired.

“Yes,” answered Marie, “I have five sous that I have been desired to put into the box.”

“Very well, put them into your shoes, and put the soles of your feet upon them, praying God to hasten the beatitude of the poor little angel. Then you will be able to go on your way without hindrance.”

We blessed the old woman heartily.

After that, Marie Sigorel was able to walk easily, and we performed our pilgrimage as well as possible.

(Related by Lise Bellec, dressmaker, Port-Blanc.)