

The Night-Watch

By A. Le Braz

The night-watch beside a corpse is called "*Ann-noz-veil*."

Certain persons know beforehand if there is about to be one in the neighbourhood.

My father-in-law was one. He had a stick made of red wood which he called his "night companion." It was a strong "*penn-baz*" (staff), which could be hung upon the wrist by means of a little leather strap. When my father-in-law returned from a walk he never failed to hang his stick upon a nail behind the wardrobe. Always two or three days before a Night-Watch was going to take place in the country-side, the stick of red wood began to sway to and fro, at first slowly, then faster and faster, between the wardrobe and the door, knocking alternately against each. When it struck the wardrobe it seemed to say "Ding," and when it struck the wall to say "Dong." It sounded like the pendulum of a clock, or still more like a passing bell. This "Ding Doing" would sometimes last for half-an-hour.

We grew pale with terror.

But my father-in-law would quietly say:

"Don't let it disturb you! It only means that a Night-Watch will soon take place."

(Related by René Alain. Quimper, 1887.)