



## VILLAGE LIFE IN FRANCE.

BY THE MARQUIS DE CHAMBRUN.

THESE title words recall to the lover of French rural life, scenes and images which his memory is likely to clothe in ideal colours. Yet even the traveller, we are told, who has chanced to cross hurriedly through the provinces of France, through Normandy, Brittany, or Champagne, or who, journeying toward the Mediterranean, has seen in passing the districts of Beaujolais and the banks of the Rhone, remembers always with pleasure the vast meadows of the north or the gay vineyards of the south. And here and there among these his memory does not fail to recall to him the little hamlets on the hillsides, with their stone steeples erect and standing out in the midst of the low stone huts grouped around them.

Nor does this image, which, of course, changes in colour and aspect according to the region one travels through, ever differ much in general outline. Whether the village be located in lower Normandy on a creek overhung with willows and bathed in the blue Norman haze, or on some dry and stony mountain peak of Auvergne, there still remains a similarity between them.

\* Most of the engravings that illustrate this article are by that accomplished artist who has made Breton life especially his own. Few persons in Canada have the wealth which will enable them to become liberal patrons of the fine arts; and some who have the wealth have not the taste or disposition. But our own patriotic Lord Strathcona has both. His picture gallery at Montreal contains one of the finest collections of paintings on this continent. Among them is a picture which commanded the highest price ever paid in this Dominion, if

The old church has its same gray walls, its same weathercock; the town hall its same creepers growing over the official placards, and the cure after his midday meal paces up and down the parsonage garden, reading his breviary, with his dark three-cornered hat shading his eyes. There, too, near by stands the chateau, oftentimes an old and historic dwelling-place, the home of the hamlet's benefactor, of the one whom the peasants generally look up to with respect, and to whom every one turns when advice is needed and assistance sought.

The village in France is an entity, so to speak, an independent autonomy, which has its mayor, its municipal council, its rector, and its schoolmaster. It has also its special customs, its feast days, and it preserves oftentimes fragments of its own church ritual. In many instances it has kept up its own fraternity for the burial of the dead. Quaint old institutions these are, which run far back into the past, and have preserved to this day something of the old costumes, half clerical, half martial, of the middle ages. Etiquette is strictly observed in the village; a person is valued there, as he is somewhat everywhere, according to the function he holds, his learning, or his wealth.

not in the whole of America, namely, Jules Breton's "First Communion," for which Lord Strathcona paid the sum of \$45,000. It is a painting of exquisite pathos and beauty. We present herewith another picture by the same famous artist. It is a peasant woman of Brittany sitting at the door of the church, holding in her hand the wax taper which the Breton peasants bear in religious processions. The devout expression, the wistful earnestness of this simple peasant will touch every heart.—*En.*