

seems to recede as we advanced; it looked darker and yet more awful under a gloomy, unbroken gray sky. As we drew nearer, we saw that the huge conical mass of granite rock was circled near its base by ramparts and towers. Above was a village of clustered houses, and above these a solid wall of granite rock, on which appeared, first, the fortress, then the abbey buildings, and, poised above all, the church.

Tradition says that Mont St. Michael was once united to the continent, and closely surrounded by forests; and there is an amount of petrified wood dug up from time to time, which gives colour to this legend.

In the eighth century, St. Aubert founded here a monastery of Benedictines. At the Revolution the monastery was suppressed, and the convention turned it into a prison for three hundred Breton and Norman priests. In 1863 the abbey was restored to its original destination, and ten priests of the order of St. Edme were established there. As we get nearer, the Mont takes a grander and severer aspect. There is something almost savage in the ruggedness of its tawny, moss-grown walls, so built on the rock itself, that one seems a part of the other. Around its base is a wall with round towers at intervals, machicolated all round the top. Above these walls, houses cluster among trees, and from them rises the bare tremendous rock, on which is built the abbey fortress, crowned by the stone church. It seems as if a bare mass of granite had been suddenly transformed into a lofty church. The two points which fix the eye are the church, as it were in the air above, and the marvellous buttressed wall, upwards of two hundred and forty-five feet long, and one hundred and eight feet high.

The entrance to the abbey is very sombre and mysterious-looking, and leads up some steps into the guard-room. Here, formerly, the vassals of the monastery assembled on solemn occasions. From there we went along a gloomy passage, till we reached an immense crypt, upwards of two hundred and forty-five feet long, by about forty feet broad.

It is difficult to describe the effect of the cloister just after emerging from the sepulchral gloom of the crypt. The name "Palace of Angels," given to the abbey by its monks, seems well applied here. We came out suddenly into full daylight in a square court, quite three hundred feet above the sands, surrounded on all sides by a triple row of more than two hundred columns. It is impossible to overpraise the charming lightness and beauty.