

Chapter One

A FRENCH CATHEDRAL CITY

HERE are in France to-day three distinct classes of cities—one might even add, of cathedral cities—and as the bishopric is a dignity far more usual in France than in England, "cathedral" may serve for the present as a term inclusive of many towns.

Firstly, there is the town whose local importance has remained unchanged through a succession of centuries and an eventful history, which has added a modern importance to that bequeathed to it by Time. Such towns are Le Mans, Angers, Amiens and Rouen. Secondly, we find the towns whose glory has departed, but who still preserve the outward semblance of that glory, though they remind us in passing through them of a body without a spirit, of an empty house, whose inhabitants are long dead and have left behind them only the echoes of their past footsteps. These towns are a picturesque group, and if we go back upon the centuries, we shall find in