

A FRENCH SKETCHING GROUND: UZERCHE, CORRÈZE



"PLACE DE LA MAIRIE, UZERCHE"
PENCIL AND WASH DRAWING
BY S. M. LITTEN. (Published by
A. A. Bailey, Esq., Sloane Gallery)

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(Illustrated by the Author.)

"THE Town of Fairy Tales!" Uzerche is just that; it gives one the feeling of all the fairy tales that one has ever read. One feels that the people there to-day are just disguised in their modern clothes; a little magic—and the artist must take all his magic with his paints—will transform them into the familiar figures of Hans Andersen and The Blue Book of Fairy Tales. That old lady over there with the funny little white muslin cap; surely it requires little of the artist's magic to transform her into a fairy godmother. Now, poor old soul, she may still do some fairy godmothering, but she also has to do a lot of hard, prosaic work, and her poor old shoulders will often be bent under the weight of water buckets. ❖ ❖ ❖

There in the garden is the pumpkin of "Cinderella," and there on the rocks, sunning themselves—a rare treat this last summer—are the lizards, ready to be turned into ponies. One might be tempted to buy a packet of beans and quite expect one to sprout up into the sky, as happened in "Jack and the Bean Stalk." ❖ ❖

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The houses themselves, although built for defence, do not frown on one. They seem to have forgotten those grim days, and smile at one, as if to say: "What fun it is to be a fairy tale town!" The towers—and there are many—have the oddest shaped roofs, stuck on at comic, rakish angles, for all the world like fantastic hats, some pushed back and others turned up at the front as if to get a better view of things happening round about. ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

Even the river, the Vezère, in a fanciful way, spells out the town's initial letter. Uzerche has just grown on this promontory, like lichen on a wall; nobody seems to know of its beginning, it just "grewed." Of course, it cannot be reached by railway, which does not figure in the fairy tales. But the people who built the line (the Paris-Orleans Railway) must have thought of respecting its wishes, because the town is made completely invisible from the railway or station by a hill which screens it entirely. ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

For the artist and other grown-up children this charming town is a real delight, and the surrounding country is equally enchanting.

S. M. LITTEN.