

5 — SARZEAU PLACE Marie Le France

When Marie Le Franc arrived in Sarzeau after her sojourns in Banastère and Pencadénic, it marked a rupture, as she wrote in *Enfance marine*:

"I think that here is where the second stage of my childhood began, the less interesting stage; that of a coherent world which, when you seek to relive it, did not require the creation of a second childhood. [...] And this second stage began at the precise moment when we got down from the cart, beside a ditch full of shadows, although the unassuming Sarzeau could not take the credit for my unexpected start; Sarzeau, which invites one to flee because of the knot of roads it commands, all of which flow to the sea but which I was not to discover until later. A high wall bordered the ditch and beyond it was a wood. The small, low house that was to be ours was on the other side of the road.

This customs house is also mentioned in a short story, *Choses de France*, published in 1906:

"Do you know, over there at the edge of the Breton marshes, a small house that faces the shore, with a small, enclosed flower garden full of primroses in the spring, and carnations and sunflowers in the summer? Push open the wooden gate, take a look out of the wide-open window, you will see a gentle, grey-haired woman busy with her humble mending of humble clothes. [...] Soon you will see the father come home after taking his daily walk along the shore, where he listened to the cries of the gulls and the curlews to see if they foretold a storm.

It was in this little house that I grew up, it was here, facing this moving, changing horizon of the Breton Gulf, that I dreamed of bigger horizons; it was this Brittany so grey and gentle on the eyes, that fostered in me the desire to know the harsher, whiter land where we are now."

The house on Rue Paul Helleu, where the family lived later and which also had a garden facing the Gulf, is mentioned in her letters as "a large barracks of a house that demands care and strength".

Over time though, Marie Le Franc grew attached to this family house which was difficult to heat, and towards the end of her life she wrote: "In spite of the special problems of old houses, I shall leave mine with regret as it represents home, where one grows used to things, especially when it brings the breath of the Atlantic. [...] I myself will never give up coming to breathe the air of the Rhuys Peninsula on spring days".

She never gave up; she lies close by, facing the Gulf.